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# TRIBAL

SITUATION

in

# INDIA

*Edited by K. Suresh Singh*

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## THE TRIBAL SITUATION IN INDIA



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EDITED BY  
K. SURESH SINGH



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDY  
RASHTRAPATI NIVAS, SHIMLA

@ Indian Institute of Advanced Study 1972

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## Foreword

The present volume is the revised edition of the papers presented at a Seminar on "The Tribal Situation in India" in 1972 which was reprinted in 1986 and 1992. The editor of the volume has revised the presentations and added one paper "The Tribal Situation in Madhya Pradesh" by K.C. Dubey.

The proceedings give us a perception of the various strands in the complex processes of the adjustment of India's tribal population to the idiom of a developing nation. I do hope that the revised edition will be a contribution towards a realistic and sympathetic execution of the contemporary situation in a sensitive and potentially explosive section of Indian society.

I thank Dr. K. Suresh Singh for his efforts and hope the revised edition will be welcomed by the interested readers.

*Shimla*  
*February 5, 2002*

V.C. SRIVASTAVA  
Director

## Preface

to the Second Revised Edition

The proceedings of the seminar on tribal situation published under the title *The Tribal Situation in India* turned out to be the most popular work, widely commented upon, cited and much used, ever brought out by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, going into the third print, and now the second revised edition. The reason for the runaway success of this publication was that it was the first comprehensive review of the tribal situation and that it posited the model of integration of tribes, as against the paradigm of assimilation which of course was never explicitly expressed. The Seminar also discussed a whole range of other issues. The work which became the reference point for all researchers on tribal situation was described as 'seminal', path-breaking, etc. (see the book reviews). Reviews of regional tribal situation followed including one on Kerala done by P.R.G. Mathur. However, there were information gaps, the most important being the absence of any material on Madhya Pradesh, with the largest tribal population in India. This has now been filled up with a comprehensive paper written by Dr. K.C. Dubey. A select bibliography has also been added showing among other things the impact of the work.

Since this work was published, the tribal scenario has been radically transformed. Tribal movements and uprisings have occurred on a larger scale. New tribal states have come into being. Tribal self-rule is the buzzword. New issues concerning environment, human rights, tribals' rights in their resources, gender, poverty, backwardness have been debated on a scale such as never before. The Indian Institute of advanced Study organised a seminar on Tribal Situation, twenty-five years after the first one held, to address some of these issues. As one scholar pointed out, while 'action' was the focus in 1967, diversities of tribal situation and wide ranging research were the staple of academic discussion in 1992. The proceedings of the second seminar have been edited by Professor Mrinal Miri under the title *Continuity and Change in Tribal Society*.

However, the first work remains relevant today, as the first comprehensive survey of tribal situation, the first informed discussion on a whole range of tribal issues, and the first coherent statement on integration, which as it said, is an ongoing process that should never stop.



## Preface

The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, a centre of higher learning and research, is dedicated to the exploration of ideas and the pursuit of knowledge. Its principal aim is to provide atmosphere and essential infrastructure, conducive to quiet contemplation and serious study, to a community of scholars engaged in individual or group research.

From time to time the Institute holds seminars, conferences, and workshops focused on specific themes, to which leaders of thought and action are invited. Each such get-together is carefully planned, as a meeting of minds and an adventure of ideas, to generate insights and perspectives on issues of conceptual or contemporary significance. Their proceedings are published in the Transactions series of the Institute. This volume brings together the papers presented at a seminar on *The Tribal Situation in India*. In these papers, and also in the succinct summary of the discussions, the reader will find perceptive analyses of the various strands in the complex processes of the adjustment of India's tribal population to the idiom of an emerging nation. This book will contribute towards a realistic and sympathetic appraisal of the contemporary situation in a sensitive, vulnerable, and potentially explosive part of Indian society.

The Institute is grateful to all those who participated in the seminar and contributed their deep insights into the problems and processes of tribal India.

The editorial responsibility for this volume was assigned to Dr. K. Suresh Singh, a brilliant historian and a dedicated officer of the Indian Administrative Service. The Institute is thankful to him for handling this task with imagination.

Simla

March 15, 1972

S. C. DUBE

Director



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# Introduction

## I

The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, in collaboration with the Centre for Advanced Study in Sociology of the Delhi University, convened a Seminar on the Tribal Situation in India (1969). The Seminar held from July 6 to 19 at the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, in Shimla, could not have been more opportune. The situation in the north-east tribal region, having remained turbulent over the past few years, gave hope. Elsewhere in the country, the tribal scene was becoming rapidly politicised, and tribal unrest had turned violent at a few places. A new tribal image was emerging. It was time to take stock of the situation and help to evolve guidelines that could promote the development of emerging forces within the framework of the unity, strength and integrity of the country.

In keeping with its tradition of building up multidisciplinary approaches to the investigation of social/national problems, the Institute brought together a cross-section of the people connected with tribal situation. There was anthropologists (18), sociologists (14), social workers (4), journalists (2), tribal leaders (6), administrators (4), and representatives of the tribal research institutes and other institutes interested and involved in tribal studies (17).

The objectives of the Seminar were:

- (i) Stocktaking of the available information on the basis of first-hand studies on the problems of tribes, region by region, with a view to locating major gaps in our information and for cross fertilization of ideas through discussions;
- (ii) Framing detailed suggestions regarding the problems which need immediate attention from purely academic as well as national point of view; and
- (iii) Evolving certain policy guidelines on general problem of national unity and integration of the relatively isolated areas and communities into the mainstream of national life, and on specific problems of economic development, education, administration and cultural development, to make possible the liaison between policy-makers and social scientists in research and policy formation.

The papers presented and the discussions that followed ranged over a wide spectrum. In all fifty-four papers were presented, out of which thirty-nine papers have been included in *extenso*, ten papers have been summarised, and six papers dropped. The papers were arranged contentwise to facilitate the stocktaking of available information and the examination of theoretical and practical problems concerning

- A. Regional tribal situations: perspectives and problems;
- B. Social and cultural communications;
- C. Policy, politics and administration;
- D. Agrarian issues and economic development,
- E. Movements and leadership; and
- F. Problems of integration.

The Inauguration set the tone. Professor Niharranjan Ray spoke on the historical background of the contemporary tribal scene. He dealt with the peaceful assimilation of the *janas* into *jatis*; the forces released by the establishment of the British Raj such as the opening up of the country, extension of communications and administration; advent of Christianity; and development of anthropological studies. These influences exposed the tribal society to change. Prof. M.N. Srinivas dwelt on the need for gathering systematic information, which is vital to the success of planned change, and for a dialogue between policy-makers and social scientists. Anthropological and sociological research, he added, was no longer peripheral or irrelevant to the crucial pursuit of the firm objectives of economic development and political stability. In a penetrating analysis of the contemporary tribal situation, Prof. S.C. Dube, who delivered the inaugural address, spoke of the recurrent convulsions that have gripped the Indian scene. The *Raj* had bequeathed a legacy of a situation 'when the bonds between tribal and non-tribal groups were tenuous and fragile', 'a legacy of friction' between the two groups, a 'policy of isolation and protection' which in the absence of 'dynamic purposive social action' perpetuated backwardness and kept tribes out of the 'mainstream of national life, economic development and social progress'. As a corollary to democratization processes, an 'articulate and effective political elite' has emerged, and politics has been established as 'the principal mode for finding solution to their many problems'. What spells danger is 'the simultaneous forging of tribal solidarity and the alienation of the tribes as a category from the rest of the country's population'. It should be noted, however, that the resilience of the country's political system has since been emphatically shown in the formation of states in the north-east, which has had evidently a quiescent effect on the turbulent situation, and the working of the participant democracy from district level upwards, as evidence suggests, has to some extent softened parochial tendencies.

## II

As a prelude to the region-wise survey of the tribal situation, the paper on tribal demography (Roy Burman) set the tribal situation in the perspective of the Census (1961) data. An amalgam of 450 and odd tribes and sub-tribes, the Indian tribal population constitutes 6.87% of the total population. A few sophisticated sections apart, the tribals are the most backward, the rate of



their literacy is low, and their economy primitive. They are situated along the sensitive strategic borders and deep in the mainland where they constitute 50% or more of the total population in as many as 285 *talups* (subdivisions).

There is a qualitative difference between the tribal situation in the north east and along the Himalayan borders on the one hand, and that elsewhere in the country, on the other. In the first area, which remained relatively isolated, the features that stand out are a preponderant tribal population, an 'officially' enforced isolation, a self-sufficient economy, and a relative absence of agrarian issues (except Tripura). There are no aliens (*Jitius*). There were however contacts between the Ahoms and the Nagas (Jhakkar), the Assamese tribals and non-tribals. The Brahmaputra was the artery of trade and the channel of communication and cultural penetration. Since independence new developments flow from the impact of an intensive administration and new forces of communication and contact released by the construction of defence roads and the movement of the army. These new activities have entailed a certain rise in standards of life of some people, and the growth of a *nouveau riche*, made up of local tribal contractors, businessmen and military suppliers. As around industrial areas, tribal agriculture is being commercialised in some parts of this region too. For reasons of history and geopolitics the north east shows a much higher range of politicization. The focus of historical processes of change, which worked in the tribal areas elsewhere in the country in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, has now shifted to the north east. Village communities are disintegrating, and a new individualism is taking shape.

The tribal regions extending over middle India present a different set of conditions. They have been exposed to the forces of change such as the movement of non-tribal population through history. Tribes are no longer in absolute majority here except in about eight districts. With the British occupation, the entire area was opened up, and administration extended. There was no Inner-Line Regulation. The regional system is complex and heterogeneous. Tribals and non-tribal communities are bound by many ties of social and economic interdependence. The extent of acculturation in all spheres, language, economy and folklore, and that of even miscegenation have been considerable (Sachchidanand, Das, Srikanth, Partap, Singh). Tribal economy shows endless variations from shifting cultivation to settled agriculture. Tribal economy is no longer self-sufficient. Agriculture has remained primitive. Barring a few sophisticated tribal groups, the tribes are steeped in poverty and indebtedness. Their communitarian agrarian system has collapsed, and alienation of tribals' land has assumed alarming proportions (Luchs, Singh). Tribal uprisings have occurred on a large scale, but the level of politicization (except in Chotanagpur) is relatively low. The confrontation between the tribals and aliens has, however, taken on new virulence.

The north east region understandably attracted much notice and claimed

the largest number of papers—seven—and about three sessions of the Discussions. The entire region is in a state of flux. In the North East Frontier Agency, among the changes the most notable have been the beginning of settled agriculture, development of marketable surpluses, monetization of tribal economy, and the rise of a new consciousness (Ering). The situation has many dimensions (Roy Burman). There is a security aspect to it, and there is the problem of bringing the tribal people out of their isolation into the mainstream of Indian nationalism (Roy Burman, Puri, Mankekar). Transport and communication is a major hurdle, and this could be overcome by developing suitable lines of communication through East Pakistan, as part of the Indo-Pak co-operation (Puri). Its feasibility was questioned; it could be more worthwhile laying the network of communications through one's own territory. There is also the paramount task of the assimilation and integration of the tribes into the Indian nation for sheer humanistic reasons (Mankekar). There were, no doubt, many obstacles. Ignorance and lack of knowledge about tribals of the region, tribals' distrust of the people of the plains, the legacy of the British policy of isolating the tribal people and the Western missionaries' activities could be mentioned in this connection (Mankekar). There was also another way to view the developing situation. The separatist tendencies could be construed as 'natural attempts' on part of the hill tribes to 'define their socio-cultural identity *vis-à-vis* the others'. It was all part of the process of nation-building. 'The experience of being integral parts of a nation and their difficulty in quickly and ungratifyingly accepting the needs to be sympathetically viewed. We have to find ways to reduce, if not remove, the causes of their disaffection and to help them to achieve their social aspirations with the framework of social justice and broadly defined national interests' (Srinivas and Sanwal).

The situation in Nagaland was not without hope, and there were signs of an 'unusual dynamism of the emerging situation' (Aram), even through the quality of the peace without settlement that prevailed would admit of different interpretations. There was, however, a growing love of peace and normalcy, and of progress and development; on the other hand, community traditions were weakening and socio-economic disparities were widening in the wake of the development programmes. All tribes did not benefit equally from them. Efforts are needed in the direction of achieving a permanent cease-fire and framing a new policy of development whose benefits may be evenly distributed to all (Aram, Thakkar).

Two developments of far greater significance have been the emergence of Bangladesh. The process and the fact of the emergence of Bangladesh have improved the political climate in the sub-continent, and represented the triumph of the values that should inform it. This should reassure tribal people. Another result of this new development has been that the Indian army in collaboration with the Mukti Vahini has flushed out the bases maintained for

the training of the rebel Naga and Mizo hostiles by Pakistan, and supplied by China and CIA. Rebel forces are in disarray. Rebel Naga leaders have surrendered. Rebel Mozos, above 300 of them, have escaped to Burma. A friendly Bangladesh will not countenance rebel activities from her territories against a friendly India. This may mark the end of rebel activities and strengthen the hands of the moderate and sane elements among tribals. The relative isolation of the north-east is also now at an end. Transit to this region through Bangla Desh by means of road, water-ways, railways, and air should now be quicker and cheaper. This fact, coupled with the fact of the creation of new states, should enable the majority of the tribal people in this region to seek the development of their enormous talents and capabilities within the framework of the Indian nation.

More exciting are the possibilities of regional development to the mutual benefit of the two nations in the region. It is common knowledge that the closure of markets in and of the transit route to Calcutta through East Pakistan had given a setback to tribal economy. This contributed in no small measure to tribal discontent. With the emergence of Bangladesh there are prospects of the renewal of border trade. This will have a healthy impact on the growth of tribal economy. There are also immense possibilities of development that could be generated by the harnessing of hydraulic potential and other natural resources for the benefit of the two peoples. In all, the tribal situation in the north-east appears far more reassuring today than when the Seminar met. The future is pregnant with new possibilities.

There were interesting developments in the Western Himalayas, which also share an international boundary (Dhir, Negi). This region as a whole was generally less isolated than the eastern wing. There were challenges posed by the decay of the old order and growing unemployment, but the benefits of the development are evident. The government has done 'all that was practicable to make the lives of the people happier and healthier' (Dhir). Not many agreed with this. There were the gradual monetisation of tribal economy, influx of floating population of soldiers, businessmen and contractors, popularity of crops as 'money-spinners', and a visible rise in the standard of living. Is this a passing phase? A vigorous and integrated programme is very much needed for the development of animal husbandry, horticulture and industries, and for the stability of the hill economy that has received a boost with the construction of roads and the movement of the army, to 'ensure a balanced and self-generating growth process'. There was need for 'sympathetic and duty-motivated administrative cadres in the areas, for a clean and honest administration, because the government has to take a lead in promoting guided growth and change in tribal society' (Negi).

A view was expressed that the Kinnaur society is composite, and that functional groups such as the blacksmith (*Domang*) and shoe-makers (*Chamang*) developed within the tribal society in response to the technology that came to



their world years ago. The Kinnauri society is characterised by 'a common overall similarity and identity in social pastures, in dress and other modes of living, and in faith and belief, folklore and tradition'. The bond is so strong that both the upper social strata (Kaner/Raiputs) and the lower social groups (*Chamang*, etc.) fit completely the tribal social structure (Negri). This was debatable. There were also elements of heterogeneity in an evidently composite structure. The Kinnauris show clear-cut heterogeneity in respect of terrain, ecology, race and religion, styles of dress, social customs and dialect. The homogeneity projected by the people's self-identification is illusory (Kapoor).

An irony underlies the situation in Kinnaur where the high caste has been declared a scheduled tribe, and the low caste a subordinate caste (Dhir); economic and political dominance of the high caste group is a phenomenon common to all other regions.

Ladakh was not germane to the discussion of the tribal situation (Saraswati, A summary of Papers). However, the situation in the strategic border region described in terms of the Ladakhis 'quiet for self-identification as a vix the Kashmiris merited notice'. Not many would, however, support the plea for only the cultural integration of Ladakh with the rest of India 'through arranging pilgrimages to the Buddhist centres'.

We move on from the east and west to the plateau of Middle India, which account for the largest concentration of the tribes in the country. We may appropriately begin with the Chotanagpur, the window on this tribal world, the scene of the sharpest interaction of historical forces and of tribal revolts, the most politicised and the best known region. A comprehensive account of the tribal situation in Bihar (Chotanagpur) was presented to stress the interaction between tribals and non-tribals at all levels and in all respects within the composite regional system (Sachchidanand). Since independence, the rate of development has been speeded up, the Panchayat institutions have been introduced, and a new leadership has emerged. Another aspect to the situation has been the tribals' radical mood focused by frustration and the revolution of rising expectations. This is reflected in the current spate of violence and the military of their slogans. Tribal solidarity is being undermined by the conflicts between the Christian and non-Christian sections of the tribal community (Sachchidanand, Vidvarthi).

Orissa accounts for the largest percentage of tribal to total population in this region (Das). As in Chotanagpur, tribals are at different levels of acculturation. There is a whole range from isolated communities at one end and agriculturist groups who are indistinguishable from the general population at the other end of the spectrum.

We skip Madhya Pradesh, which has the largest concentration of the tribes, because we did not receive any paper on the tribal situation in the state. A historical dimension, however, is given to the relationship between the Aryans and the Proto-Australoids, the gradual assimilation of the two groups,

the infiltration and colonization of the region by the midland Aryans (Bhattacharya). Southern Kappata and Kanat remain other information gaps. The tribal situation of the tribal tracts under the shattering effect of the partition in the region even may deserve attention (Vyas). However, the Western and Deccan tribes are described in general terms with as their ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversities and their different levels of acculturation primitive, transitional and assimilated (Verrier Elwin Sarkar). The problems and conditions of the tribes in Maharashtra, the different stages of their growth and development are similar to those elsewhere (Sarkar).

Tribes in the South are small, but their problems, with particular reference to their backwardness, their exploitation by money lenders, and land alienation, which is the root cause of current tribal unrest, are acute (Moorthy). The tribal situation in Andhra Pradesh, which shares the characteristics of the eastern peninsula, brings out a variety of ethnic and cultural patterns, economic and social complexion, political extremism, and land alienation (Pratap). The small tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar islands are described at great length (Pandit), and attention is drawn to the need for the biological preservation of the surviving tribal community, maintenance of an equation between new settlers and original inhabitants, and for well trained administrative cadres'.

### III

We pass on from a regionwise survey of tribal situation to an assessment of the forces of continuity and change in tribal society. We take up under socio-cultural communications papers that bring out caste-tribe continuum (Garo Hills), relationship between tribals and non-tribals (Assam), and the role of education and Christianity in social change (north-east). Transformation of a tribal group into a group in the greater Hindu society, 'income about' without any occupational specialization within the group by the group as a whole through the process of Sanskritization (Mazumdar). The Bodo-speaking tribes of the Garo Hills is taken as a model with the Sangsarek Garo and the Sanskritized Dalu as the two opposite poles of the tribe-caste continuum. Sanskritization is spelt out in terms of abstention from beef-eating, partial or complete abandonment of the non-Hindu duties and of major elements of tribal social customs and of tribal language. The definition of tribes as a homogeneous group of people, which do not claim themselves as followers of any major religion of India (such as Hinduism, Christianity and Islam etc.) will raise many eyebrows, and an application of it to the Indian situation may render tribals almost non-existent. The societal and cultural ties between tribals and non-tribals in Assam are presented in an interesting historical perspective (Goswami). There are many interesting facets to this process: the Hinduization of tribes such as Kachari and Ahom, who emerged as a

considerable political power and defenders of neo-Hinduism in the medieval period, the interaction at linguistic and ethnic levels, and in economy. The role of modern education in bringing about social changes and political awareness among the tribals of the north-east India during the last hundred and seventy-five years is well known; not so well known is the 'positive correlation between conversion to Christianity, high percentage of literacy, social change and modernization' (Dubey). The ways of life, economy, and occupational structures of the Sanskritized tribes, on the other hand, have remained traditional. The Christian church among the Angamis has opened to the Nagas a wider fellowship of humanity and the treasures of modernity (Khrieleno Terhuja).

#### IV

Integration is the keynote the administrative policy in the north-east. In the matter of implementation, there is, however, need for taking a 'holistic view' of tribal life, for a single-line administration with proper leadership, and for a motivated administrative cadre (Haldipur).

The last General Elections (1967) in Nagaland were striking in many ways (Thakkar). Two noteworthy features of the elections were: a keen contest—the total number of candidates being 144 for 44 seats; and the other, a very heavy incidence of polling, 78.39 per cent. This could be put down to the high level of politicization, energization of all means of propaganda, traditions of the Naga village communities that make it obligatory for every villager to participate in a community duty, and to the Naga peoples' fondness of context. While the two features belied gloomy forecast about the Naga political situation, the election results are no substitute for a political settlement within the framework of national integrity.

The British administration in the Garo Hills pursued the policy of isolation and *status quo*; this was reinforced by the consciousness of the dangers to the *Raj*, the rise of Indian nationalism in the plains (Kar).

The development of socio-political system of the Jaintias (Assam) since the advent of the *Raj*, power was shared by the Raja and the people; when the Raja ceded the territories, the people resisted. But the British retained the chiefs with curtailed powers. Under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitutions district council was formed; this constitutes a threat to the 'national democracy'. Periodical elections and representative democracy are no substitute for direct participation.

The political and economic development of the hill districts of Assam, passed through many phases, particularly since 1945-46, before it culminated in the formation of the Assam sub-state and the Meghalaya (A.P. Sinha).

The proceedings of a *nyaya* (judicial) Panchayat in Rajasthan are presented to highlight economic relationship between tribals and non-tribals (Swaroop,



A Summary of Papers), but they fail to bring out the interaction between the new and traditional Panchayats, and the new and old leaderships.

In Andhra, the Saoras' political structure is intact. The Panchayats have introduced some new changes, but they have not been able to replace the old system. The current difficulties are wholly due to the economic hardships faced by the people (Suryanarayana, A Summary of Papers).

The political aspects of the situation in the Central zone are brought out vividly in the papers on the Movements and Leadership (Surajit Sinha, Mahapatra, Vidyarthi).

## V

Agrarian issues stand at the centre of the developments in the central zone. One aspect of the agrarian situation is land scarcity and land hunger (Fuchs). In the western zone, this could be attributed to the expulsion of the western tribes by the Rajputs, Marathas and the Hindu peasantry, the low productivity of their land and the primitive mode of agriculture, their continued exploitation against which agrarian laws afford little protection and the non-diversification of tribal economy. There are other aspects to the agrarian situation: inter-dependence of various social groups in tribal areas and the need for evolving an integrated solution to the economic problems of the region (Singh, S.P. Sinha). Tribal agrarian problem cannot be treated in isolation (Singh). Myths have no place in a solution. Tribals' interests have to be protected, along with those of other weaker groups. The concept of aliens (*diku*) is crucial to the understanding of the agrarian situation in a territory where non-tribals outnumber tribals. A result of agrarian legislation has been the rise of a tribal moneylender class. Alienation of land is a consequence of backwardness and indebtedness, and non-tribal weaker groups are equally affected by it. Significant amendments have been effected to the agrarian laws to make them effective, but there is need for evolving an integrated policy and programme for rapid economic development of tribal areas. The urgency of it is stressed by the largely drought-prone nature of tribal regions, the impact of drought and famine on tribal economy and tribal movements (Singh). Famine has now given way to recurrent conditions of scarcity. The solution lies in the execution of a complex of measures to supply foodgrains at concessional rate, liquidate indebtedness, provide employment in lean months, and evolve an integrated approach to tribal development in place of the present diffused and fragmentary approach. A concentrated approach to the development of tribal agriculture and economy, like the programme for the intensive development of irrigated areas, is the answer.

There is yet another aspect to economic development brought out by impact of the industrialization on the tribes: the need for the proper rehabilitation of displaced tribals (Das, A Summary of Papers). Rehabilit-

ation of the shattered hill economy also deserves attention (Bose, A Summary of Papers).

## VI

Social movements among tribes are defined as 'deliberate banding together of the tribals involved' for collective action to alter, reconstitute, reinterpret, respite, protect, supplant or create some portions of their culture or social order, or to better their life chances by redistributing the power of control in a society (Mahapatra). These movements have been shaped by the influences of Hinduism, Christianity, and the forces released by the British rule. As education and consciousness develop, a pan-tribal movement may emerge (Mahapatra).

Of social movements, the most notable is the self-conscious socio-political movement aimed at asserting political solidarity of a tribe or a group of tribes *vis-à-vis* the non-tribals (Surajit Sinha). They arise out of ecological-cultural isolation, economic backwardness, a feeling of frustration *vis-à-vis* the advanced sections. Tribes who are either too isolated or too integrated with the Hindu social system are not involved in these movements. The policy implications of this analysis are obvious: there should be provisions for larger economic opportunities and greater understanding with the emerging core of the Indian national culture (Sinha).

Much known ground is covered under 'the revivalistic movements among the tribals of Chotanagpur', and their agrarian base (Ekka). The Jharkhand movement is traced to land alienation and exploitation affecting the tribes, their antipathy towards the 'aliens', and the impact of political development elsewhere in the country (Sen).

Leadership pattern among the tribes of Bihar comes in for an incisive analysis (Vidyarthi). The leadership has developed against the background of tribal rebellions, the spread of Christianity and education, the introduction of panchayats and the holding of general elections. The early phase of a 'rural-bred, charismatic and tradition-oriented leadership which worked for the revitalization of the tribes on the Hindu (and Christian) model' gave way to the 'western educated and urban-bred Christian leadership', which held the field till the third General Elections. They became the 'executive model of leadership for several decades' (1900-1962), and dominated the Jharkhand party. This order changed as the cleavage between backward non-Christian tribals and advanced Christian tribals deepened. It found 'a political expression in the failure of the Christian tribals in winning most of the Assembly and Parliamentary seats'. This 'represents the increased awareness on the part of the 90% non-Christian tribes, and their desire to elect non-Christian tribals as their leaders', an implicit 'revival of the Hindu model', a 'stronger sense of identity with the major regional culture and a will for establishing regional

identity within wider frame of national integration' (Vidyarthi). At the local level, however, the leadership is 'mostly institutional, formal and hereditary'. The two types of leaderships, rural and urban, institutional and non-institutional, traditional and educated-rational, interact.

## VII

Tribal integration was looked at from many angles. Some took the well-known 'assimilationist' line to question the present categorization of the tribals of the exposed Central Zone as such, and underlined their similarities with non-tribals in the region. The term 'tribe' as coined by the British was an administrative and even political category and had hardly any social or cultural connotation; today it has come in handy as a lever to exploit 'tribal consciousness' (Mathur, Doshi, Gulati). The tribes in this area have shown willingness to come within the fold of national culture', and have been integrated into the broader system of India. This process is, however, not without dysfunctional consequences. The system of granting special facilities and privileges has created a vested interest, inhibiting the growth of self-reliance among the tribals. What is needed is a new policy that should take into account the levels of integration reached by different sections of tribals (Doshi).

Problems in the north-east are different as they arise out of the hillmen's deep-rooted fear and suspicion of the plains men, the past neglect of economic development under the *Raj*, and the missionaries' distrust of the tribal community traditions. The deliberate isolation under the *Raj* enhanced the fear of exploitation. The problem of integration in Nagaland is essentially political and should be treated as such (Ao).

Rapid industrialization also poses the problem of integration, which is 'meeting together of divergent cultures without loss of cultural identity and individuality' in an urban industrial society. The tribes have formed the fringe communities in terms of their participation in economic, political and ritual structure. Under industrialization, to which a tribe is more sensitive and suited, there is probably no escape for the tribes from detribalizing themselves, so that there would not be any difference between an Oraon and a Hindu, Tamil and a Toda. There is thus no point in integration, in keeping the tribals on the fringe (Chattopadhyaya).

Even and processes, as revealed, in a market place of Chotanagpur (Bihar) are conceptualized in terms of the three levels of cultural identity, tribalism, pluralism and nationalism (D.P. Sinha). The first antedates the second and the third, which are the byproducts of rapid socio-cultural change. The first represents anxiety, insecurity and distrust of the aliens and the struggle for power. The terms proved 'controversial' in the absence of adequate data. A second look at these was promised.

The misunderstanding that integration into the mainstream of national



life implies accepting the Hindu way of life was sought to be dispelled by recalling the secular concepts underlying the nascent Indian ideal of integration (Bose). A religion is to be judged by its quintessence. Modern Indian system incorporates Mahatma Gandhi's concept of a secular state, which is neutral in respect of religion and of religious faith, a completely private and personal matter. The state is a secular instrument of the redemption of the masses from exploitation, and of their progress.

## VIII

The Discussion brought out in a sharper focus the complexity of the tribal situation and the diversity of the perception and viewpoints concerning it. Social reality being complex, it could not be reduced to absurd simplicity (Srinivas). There were variations in development not only between one tribal region and another (Bihar and Orissa), but also between different sections of the same tribe. The impact of the processes of change was uneven. The patterns of interaction between peasant and tribal community and the levels of acculturation, the problems of backward tribals and poor peasants showed far-ranging variations.

The Discussion also focused the points for action in the total strategy of forging the sinews of social action. First, a redefinition and rescheduling of tribe, which had been introduced as a mere classificatory device by the British (Mathur, Ray), should be undertaken to ensure an even flow of benefits to the really backward and needy sections of the tribal community. A vested interest has now developed in backwardness. Rational social and economic criteria should be laid down for the determination of a tribe (Srinivas and others) by a properly constituted commission (Srikant).

Secondly, the continuing backwardness of weaker sections of the tribal community, which lay at the root of growing tension between Christian and non-Christian tribals, called for special remedial measures. There were also sharper confrontations between tribals and non-tribals (*dikus, kochas*).

Thirdly, a new tribal elite, a class of tribal entrepreneurs, was coming of age and exploited its fellowmen (Singh, Sirsalkar, Moorthy). It was an instrument of modernization, but effective safeguards against its exploitation must be built into the development mechanism in tribal region.

Fourthly, 'nostalgic romanticism' has no place in the scheme of development. Modernization of tribals within the overall plan of speedy national reconstruction and development is a categorical imperative. While there has been substantial progress in education and progress of medical programmes, the tribals are still at a very low level of subsistence and development.

This brings up, fifthly, to the question of integration. The Indian Constitution and political system postulate democracy, socialism and secularism, which provide a modern basis of integration (Uberoi, Ray and

others). The processes of economic planning are creating a modern productive organisation. Integration into the mainstream of Indian life does not imply a loss of cultural autonomy of the components making up the nation. The problem has to be tackled on the basis of levels of understanding; many bridges of understanding have to be built to promote national integration. In this process, the press, voluntary agencies, media of communication, anthropologists and social workers, and tribal research institutions have a role to play.

## IX

The points that emerged from the papers and the discussions were reflected in the Statement adopted by the Seminar. All problems of group identity and autonomy were capable of being solved within the framework of the Constitution and the Indian Union. Demands for varying degrees of autonomy need not be considered anti-national, but should be understood as simply an articulation of tribals' fear of their loss of cultural autonomy and of exploitation by economically more advanced groups. On land and economic questions, the Seminar called for a clear-cut programme of development and protection, a review of the current forest policy to enable about 50% of tribes who depend on forests to utilize them, plugging of loopholes in existing agrarian legislations, rapid economy development of the backward region and integration of displaced tribals into the new industrial economy. Mass media could be suitably energized to promote integration. 'Tolerance is a quality without which we can hardly survive as a nation', and it is for all of us to see that the process of integration, which will 'grow and deepen' with development, 'does not stop'.

## X

It was probably the first time that a Seminar of this kind was held to take stock of the available information on tribal situation, frame suggestions and evolve guidelines. The papers and discussions that followed highlighted the tribal situation in 1969. Not all papers were based on first-hand studies, and they were uneven in their quality and range. It was my unpleasant duty as an editor to modify and summarize papers, and drop a few of them in order to maintain the coherence of subject matter and avoid duplication.

Madhya Pradesh, south Rajasthan and Gujarat remained major information gaps. Impact of urbanization and industrialization was touched upon in passing. Exploration of the problems of poorer sections of the tribals was another area of vital concern. Political development and emerging tribal leadership, agrarian questions, development of tribal economy, could have been discussed at length, and their regional variations brought out in greater depth.

The study of tribal movements with regard to their locus and leadership, based on primary sources, is also a relatively uncharted area. In this connection, a pointed reference was made to the need for the study of the Naga underground movement. Intensive research is needed at micro levels to bring out the complexity of tribal situation in its agrarian, political acculturation and economic dimensions. More information is needed to appreciate the tribal situation and evolve correct guideline. The Seminar did succeed in sizing up the situation and framing issues for social action and adaptive research in future.

Understanding and urgency should be the keynote of the implementation of social and economic programmes for the benefit of the tribal population. Delay in building up the bridges of communication and in undertaking an integrated programme for the rapid development of tribal economy and for the protection of tribal agrarian and cultural systems in the 1970s could be permitted to occur only at our peril.



PART I  
Inauguration

# Introductory Address

NIHARRANJAN RAY

## I

Ever since the Chinese aggression in 1962, the tribal disturbances along our north-eastern frontiers and in Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, and rumblings of growing discontent and unrest in a number of other tribal areas of this vast country, Indian intellectuals in general, and anthropologists and sociologists, administrators and leaders of public opinion and makers of policy, in particular, have been alerted to the vital significance of the extensive northern and north-eastern tribal border regions as much as of the 'tribal' peoples of other areas of the country. The cause of the security of the country as much as that of the unity and integration of these peoples with those of other regions and communities of the larger Indian society, it was increasingly being felt, called for a closer look at the total 'tribal' situation in the country in general and in the frontier areas in particular. It is now generally recognized that academic expertise on the human, social economic and other factors in the life of these communities of peoples is not yet adequate, and that attempts should be made towards a systematic stocktaking of our existing state of knowledge so that significant problem-areas could be defined for further study and research, and certain basic policy guidelines could be evolved with regard to the problem of integration of these relatively isolated areas and communities and the specific problems of their all-round development, in other words, in regard to the problem of drawing them into the mainstream of Indian life and society. Here then is the justification, if justification was called for, for our convening this seminar.

With this end in view we have been privileged to bring together here outstanding academic experts in the fields of anthropology and sociology, economics and political science, history, human geography and linguistics, fields of knowledge and expertise that are necessary for the understanding of the very complex 'tribal' situation in our country. We have also been privileged to have in our midst a few leaders of our 'tribal' people and social workers who have dedicated themselves to the work among the 'tribes', besides a few practising politicians, administrators and publicists who are deeply and actively concerned with this particular problem. We are avowedly seeking a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of our 'tribal' situation.

On behalf of the Governing Body of this Institute and as initiator and

organizer of this seminar, I have great pleasure in responding to our invitation, and we are intently looking forward to a purposeful dialogue on a subject that is not only important academically but a very significant one from the national point of view. The Centre of Advanced Study in Sociology of the University of Delhi led by Professor M.N. Srinivas, is collaborating in part with this Institute in the organization of this seminar. I take it as an index of his and their intellectual involvement in the 'tribal' situation in the country, and we feel very grateful and indebted to Professor Srinivas for inviting this collaboration.

Since I began with an attempt at justification of the seminar I should, I believe, also try to say a few words in regard to what, in our view, the seminar should aim at. Frankly, the seminar, to my mind should aim at

- (a) Exchange of detailed information on the basis of first-hand studies on problems of the 'tribes', region by region, with a view to locating the major gaps in our information and for cross-fertilization of ideas through discussion;
- (b) Detailed suggestion of problems which need immediate attention, both from the purely academic as well as the national points of view. This should also include suggestion of approach and methodology; and
- (c) Evolving certain policy guidelines regarding the general problems of integration of these relatively isolated areas and communities and on specific problems of their economic and cultural development, their health, education and administration, for instance. In other words, as I said earlier, we should be able to formulate certain policy guidelines as to how these areas and communities could be drawn into the mainstream of India life and society.

## II

What is this 'tribal' situation that we are speaking of? Who are these communities of people called 'tribes' that we are referring to? How did this situation come about? How long has this situation been with us? Is it one which is very modern, modern in the sense that it has been brought about to relatively recent decades by social, economic and political factors lying outside of what we call the 'tribal' communities and emerging from the cumulative effects of forces at play in and the vicissitudes of history of the mainstream of our contemporary life of say, the last one hundred and fifty years?

We cannot, I am afraid, hope to find even inadequate answers to these questions without reference to history, that is, to the story of the near and distant past of our land. Indeed, Indian sociology and social and cultural anthropology cannot be pursued meaningfully, to my mind, without recourse



to history. Non-recognition or inadequate recognition of the historical perspective has been, I believe, more often than not, responsible for the uncritical acceptance of ideas and concepts, methods and models that had a colonial origin in climes altogether different from our own.

Let me try to illustrate what I mean by referring briefly to one term, that is, one concept alone at the moment, that of what is known as *caste* by sociologists and anthropologists working on and concerned with India. *Caste* in the Indian context is, philosophically speaking, a term of Portuguese origin, and its use does not seem to pre-date the seventeenth century—1613 to be more precise—though there is a doubtful reference as early as 1563. Derived from the Latin *castus* meaning pure, unpolluted (*comp. Chaste*), the Spanish *casta* or Portuguese *cast* came to mean just the 'breed' or 'lineage' that seems to have been socially considered as pure, unpolluted. In South America, curiously enough, the Spaniards used the terms *casta* to mixed breeds of the Europeans, American Indians and Negroes. Historically, therefore, it is permissible to argue that the seventeenth and eighteenth century European writers on India saw in this land of ours a kind of social organization which must have been somewhat akin to what they presumably knew as *cast* (the modern spelling *caste* does not pre-date 1800), may be in their own society, or in that or those of their new lands which they had come to know by that time. We do not know what this society or societies were like, and hence we do not have any idea of the connotation of the term *caste*, either theoretical or functional, from the Portuguese point of view. The most that may perhaps be argued is that this social organization known to them is *cast*, was based on a hierarchical ranking of people determined by birth or lineage. The Dutch, the French, and the British, who followed the Portuguese, went no further than to accept and adopt an already accepted term and the concept that went along with it, without asking themselves if these could be applied to the Indian situation. Till as late as 1766 one finds the terms *cast* being used synonymously with 'tribe' and as late as 1813 it meant to the English writers on India nothing more than a kind of ranking based on birth.

But then came the tribe of European, mainly British, 'Orientalists' versed in Indian lore or languages, especially Sanskrit, followed many decades later by that of ethnologists who were primarily administrators or missionaries trained in the school of ethnography current at that time. For a long time the 'Orientalists' lay imprisoned with the walls of an idealistic, priestly and essentially schematic interpretation of the traditional Hindu-Brahmanical social organization as they found it recorded in a set of heretic and sacerdotal texts spread over a period of more than a millennium and a half. The ethnologists who were supposed to know better, got enmeshed, in their turn, in the cobwebs of textual interpretation on the one hand and the functional or behavioural pattern of what they had come to know as *caste* as they saw it in operation before them. For a long time they tried to explain the

latter in terms of the traditional concept of *vama* as recorded in the early and latter Vedic texts, but mainly in the *Dharmasastra* and *Dharmasutras*. At a later stage, they were confronted with another term, *jati*, but neither *vama* nor *jati*, two terms and hence two concepts which were by no means synonymous or interchangeable could explain in terms of the text alone the very complex social phenomenon which lay actively open before their eyes. Here was an organization of society that had a strongly interwoven religious undertone, more or less well-defined society relationships and at the same time, also equally well-defined economic functions in a well thought-out production system. Obviously neither *caste* as understood in the nineteenth century ethnographic climate, nor *vama* as interpreted in the hierotic and sacerdotal texts, could explain such a complex system, increasingly becoming more and more complex and proliferating itself into a countless number of ramifications, and this under the pressure of an ever-expanding and ever-assimilating society and religion and of an ever-proliferating production system.

If *caste* and *vama* could not explain the system, could *jati* do so. Perhaps it could, if we followed the logic inherent in the relevant chapters and *slokas* of the great epic, the *Mahabharata*, the *Puranas*, especially the later ones, in secular Sanskrit, Prakrit, Apoabhramsa and regional literatures and in the events and situations in history. Etymologically, the term *jati* has a biological meaning; it has something to do with birth and biological heredity and hence with familial and social relationships. But behaviourally, as seen through history, it had also a social and economic purpose and function, regulated by birth and heredity. Here was thus a system which was directed not towards mobility but towards stability and security, and who would deny that it served its purpose efficiently and well until an altogether new production system started to strike at its very roots now for the last well-nigh two hundred years.

But be that as it may, what I have been trying to hint at is this: every social organization tends to create and evolve terms and concepts in its own language to explain and interpret itself in given times and situation, to suit its own aims and purposes, function and exercises, ideas and aspirations. A time was thus reached in history, that is, in the evolution of Indian society, and this happened already before the beginning of the Christian era, when an ethnic sense, did not any longer suffice to explain the society to which the people belonged; it was simply inadequate and misleading. That it was inadequate, if not misleading, became evident atleast from about the beginning of the Christian era, when our *Smriti* writers had to explain the system by the invention of the concept of *misra* or *sankara vama*s. With the passage of time, through a process of permutation and combination, the number became simply unmanageable and the theory all but broke down, it seems. There was just no rational basis left of the system. Moreover, the way of life which was sought to be explained was not just *vamadharma* but *vamasramadhama* which connoted that the system of *vama* was not meant to stand by itself but on *vama* or *asrama*; in other

words the four traditional *vamas* were to be understood in terms and in the context of the four traditional *asramas*. Hence was the term *jati* evolved. It did not replace *vama*; that indeed remained, but its concept underwent a sea-change and came to connote *jati* for all practical purposes. I would therefore make a plea that *jati* is a better term of concept than either *vama* or *caste*, and it can explain better the Indian situation. Nor that I have any objection to the use of a foreign terms. No, I do not believe in *svadesi* in matters intellectual. But the term is inadequate, if not misleading, in the Indian context. It has never been well-defined; its connotation never made clear and its conceptual frame was left in a haze of dust. Besides, looking at the countless numbers of academic and intellectual descriptions, analyses and interpretations of our social organization in terms of *caste*, I feel confused, more often than not, if what we today call the *cast* system in India is not a creation of the anthropologists of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Maybe it is my ignorance, but as a student of Indian history and culture I cannot but confess my bewilderment.

If I have dwelt on the term *caste* at some length I have done it on purpose. I could as well have done the same thing with other terms and concepts used by sociologists and anthropologists working on India. I could have asked myself: is 'family' the same as *parivara*, 'clan' the same as *kutumba* or *gotra* or *gosthi*? But I must not do so, especially in a gathering of experts. Yet I had to spend some time on *caste* for more reasons than one. First in eighteenth century writings on India the term *caste* has often been used synonymously with 'tribe' and later, for a long time, not synonymously but in a cognate manner as in the phrase *castes and tribes*, as if they were cognate social groups. Secondly, with the rise and growth of nationalism in Europe, the term 'tribe' came to be used in denotation of a particular stage of socio-political evolution of a community of people within a given territory and language era. Clan, tribe, nation, etc. thus came to denote the various successive stages in the progressive march of a people aspiring towards nationhood. In the Indian context, *caste* was another intermediate stage thrown into this imagined story of progression, a stage that was presented to us as one of the greatest hurdles in the march towards Indian nationhood. It was in this context that the study of Indian anthropology and sociology began. Risley's *People of India* and his speculative comments on such terms as 'race', 'clan', 'caste', 'tribe', 'nation', 'people' etc. would illustrate what I mean. The situation, to my mind, has not changed very much since Risley, who, we may not forget, was an important official high up in the British Indian bureaucracy and who was one of the first to plead for the first partitioning of Bengal in his days. The term 'tribe' in Indian anthropology and sociology seems to carry this background music even today, somewhat unconsciously perhaps. Phrases like 'criminal tribes', 'scheduled castes', 'scheduled tribes' are but echoes of this music.

But let me turn to the history of the term and concept 'tribe'. Derived



from a Latin root, the Middle English term *tribuz* meaning the three divisions into which the early Romans were grouped, came to evolve into the modern English 'tribe'. With the Romans, the 'tribe' was a political division while the Greks seem to have equated it somewhat with their 'fraternities' at times, with geographical division at others. In Irish history however, the term meant families or communities of persons having the same surname. In certain other areas of the western world and certain periods of history, it stood for a division of territory allotted to a family or community. Today with the anthropologists and sociologists of western origin the term means, according to latest edition of the *Oxford Dictionary*, "a race of people; now applied especially to a primary aggregate of people in a primitive or barbarous condition, under a headman or chief". It is in this meaning, roughly speaking, that most of the western scholars working on India, have been using this term, with but slight change of emphasis here and there. I would humbly enquire: does this definition meet the relevant social situation in India?

I have also seen some of the definitions of the term given by our own experts including the one given by our esteemed friend who is giving the Inaugural Address this evening. I do not purpose to go into an analysis of these definitions, but would like to approach the question from altogether different point of view. I would suggest to myself that if along the arrow-line of history there was something in our society analogous to what is called 'tribe', and if the communities of people in India recognised it as such, we should have in our Indian languages including Sanskrit and Prakrit, a term for it. Was this term known as *jana*? The term *jana* and *jati* are both derived from the root *jan* which means 'to be born', 'to give birth to', and hence has a biological meaning, we know for certain. We know also that there were *janas* or communities of people like the Savaras, the Kullutas, the Kollas, the Bhillas, the Khasas, the Kinnaras and a countless number of recognisable names. By what term and concept were they known to the apologists and sociologists of today call 'tribe', bearing almost the same recognisable names. By what term and concept were they known to the multitudes of people of this land of Bharatavarsh? Not by what anthropologists and sociologist of today call 'tribe' certainly according to the definition I have quoted. What then was the term and concept by which these communities of people were known, communities whose list is indeed a very long one if we are to go by the evidence of the epics and *Puranas* and our secular literature? This term, to my mind, could be no other than *jana*, meaning 'communities of people'.

It is significant that in this huge body of literature whenever such and other communities of people find mention, they are always referred to in the plural number, collectively as a people or *janah*, Andhra, Savarah, Kinnarah, etc. just as we have Vangah, Magahah, Panchalah, Angah,

Cherah, Pandyah, etc. An analysis of such names and the contexts in which they are referred to, shows very clearly and unmistakably that all such communities had each a territorial habitat of their own, which can still be identified. With the passage of time each of these communities lent their names to the territory inhabited by them, and the territories came to be known as *janapadas*. Most of the local names of districts, divisions and states that we know of today, have come down to us from the *janapadas* of old; but quite a number of them have also lost their name and identity in their larger and more powerful neighbours. *Jana* therefore, seems to have been, to my mind, the term for what we have been taught to know as 'tribe', and *jati*, the socio-religious-cum-economic organization that was supposed to sustain the *jana* and keep the given community of people together.

A careful analysis of the long list of *janas* in epic Buddhist, Puranic, and secular literature of early and medieval times and the context in which they are mentioned, makes it very clear that hardly any distinction was made, until very late in history, between what we know today as 'tribes' and such communities of people who were known as the Gandharas and Kambojas, Kasis and Kosalas, Angas and Magadhas, Kurus and Panchalas, for instance. At any rate, in the whole body of historical data at our disposal there is hardly anything to suggest that these communities of people belonged to two different social and ethnic categories altogether. In fact, in the literary sources I have referred to, the communities of people whom today we refer to as 'tribe' and those that we know from history as belonging to more advanced stages of socio-economic and cultural growth, there is hardly any evidence to show that in the collective mind of India's communities of people there was any consciousness of a difference between the two sets of *janas* except in the matter of *jati*, that is, in the matter of socio-religious and economic organization alone. These *janas* whom we have been taught to call 'tribes', were indeed different from the other communities of people only in the sense that they continued to remain, for reasons which I shall soon come to, outside the control of the *jati* system of social organization.

The story of how and why they succeeded in doing so through the centuries belong to the domain of history and sociology of Indian culture to which I now propose to turn briefly for a while.

### III

The so-called 'tribals' of India, it is well-known, are the indigenous, autochthonous, people of the land, in the sense that they had been long settled in different parts of the country before the Aryan-speaking peoples penetrated India to settle down first in the Kabul and Indus Valleys and then within a millennium and a half, to spread out over large parts of the country

along the plains and river valleys. At a much later stage of history there came to this land civilized foreigners in small numbers like the Achaemenians, the Hellenistic Greeks, the Parthians and the Romans, nomadic-pastoral tribes in very large numbers and in wave after wave from the steppes of central Asia and this over a period of more than a millennium and a half, beginning with the Sakas and closing with the Turks and Mongols, and finally, again in several waves, rural and semi-agricultural Tibeto-Burmans from across the north and north-eastern borders of the country. In between and later, there were small influxes from time to time of the Arabs, Iranians and Abyssinians from Burma and Arakan regions.

By the time the Aryan-speaking peoples were settling down in the Indus and upper Ganga-Yamuna valleys, they were fast becoming rural and agricultural and hence a settled people, with a highly developed language capable of articulating very subtle and abstract ideas and thoughts. Secondly, they had by that time mastered the technology of agri-culture, acquired the experience of producing a large variety of cereals, fruits and vegetables, and of animal husbandry; they had also evolved as many as eighteen identifiable crafts. Thirdly, they had also evolved by that time a relatively developed system of local administration and certain ideas and institutions of government like kingship, *sabha*, *samiti* and *parishad*. A few centuries later they were able to give them all a highly organized and sophisticated form. Fourthly, already by about the sixth and fifth centuries BC they had evolved, and in another five hundred years they had consolidated a well-thought out and organized social and religious system that one finds recorded in *smriti* literature, the epics and the Puranas as what is generally called Brahmanical Hinduism. Fifthly, by about the beginning of the Christian era they were able to build into this socio-religious system of Brahmanical Hinduism, an economic structure based essentially on a production system managed and controlled on hereditary principles of group formation which has come to be known as the *caste* system.

There is linguistic and archaeological evidence to suggest that the pre-Aryan indigenous *janas* were settled originally on the plains and river-valleys of the land. But they were not all in same stage of development. Many of these were still in a food-gathering economy, not knowing the use of metal; a few seem to have known the use of metal, a sort of shifting, *jhum* (slash and burn cultivation) and hoe cultivation, and were perhaps on the threshold of a real food-producing economy, for instance. They seem to have lived in isolated settlements, in shelters at various levels of constructional activity, some even in natural or dug-out shelters. They spoke a variety of languages and belonged ethnically to a variety of physical types. Their religion consisted in the belief in and practices of what is called by anthropologists 'primitive' religion, and they seem to have lived in closed by well-knit social units each presided over by a headman or chief and controlled by a group of elders.

What the pressure of a superior social organization with a superior techno-



economy as that of the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples, will be on such under-developed peoples as I have just briefly described, can well be imagined. In a word, these indigenous so-called 'tribes' were just slowly but surely obliged to move bit by bit, to farther and farther areas until they came to find their refuge in relatively more inaccessible regions of forests and hills and large mountain slopes, that is, in what the records call, *atavika rajyas*, *mahakantaras* or great forest regions and *pratyanta desas* or frontier regions, on the fringes of agriculturally settled, organized and more developed areas. The process went on for centuries and millennia, in a very slow and steady but very relentless manner until very recent times since when state legislation has been trying to put a brake to it because of rising consciousness amongst these peoples themselves.

But let us have a look at the rationale of the process, that is, of the logic of sociology behind the Indo-Aryan, Hindu-Brahmanical thrust forward and the slow retreat of the *janas* or 'tribes' of under-developed economy. First, by about the beginning of the first millennium before the Christian era or shortly thereafter, the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples seem to have come to the knowledge and experience of an advanced process of smelting and forging iron and making weapons and agricultural implements out of iron. This iron technology enabled them not only to enlarge their political control and establish kingdoms and empires but also extend their agriculture and build towns and cities. Secondly, agriculture and animal husbandry being the principal source of their economy, their hunger was increasingly for more and more land for pasture and cultivation, the more with irrigation facilities the better. The relentless nature and character of this land hunger can be seen clearly from an analysis of the land grants of ancient and medieval India. These documents also make it clear that there was an insistent and ever-increasing demand to bring more and more land under cultivation especially in the unsettled, hitherto relatively non-agricultural areas, pushing the pre-food producing and low level food-producing communities farther and farther. The process was still at work as late as the late nineteenth century, in the Santhal Parganas, for instance, where taking advantage of settlement operations and other opportunities the Santhals were almost overnight dispossessed of their community lands. Thirdly, the inexorable laws of Indo-Aryan techno-economics and polity enabled these peoples to spread out and extend the bounds of their social, political and economic organization all over the country, slowly and stage by stage, but surely and inevitably. The carrier of this organization along with its ideas and institutions was the Sanskrit and Sanskritic languages which also carried with it the Hindu-Brahmanical socio-religious norms, ideas, institutions, pantheons of gods and goddesses, etc., including the socio-economic organization of *jati*. The *janas* like the Andhras, Cheras, Dravidas, etc., of India south of the Vindhyas, were successful in resisting or at least containing the pressure of Sanskrit and Sanskritic languages,

by and large, but they could resist neither the political ideas and institutions nor the Hindu-Brahmanical socio-religious system, nor the socio-economic organization of which *jati* was the pivot.

The cumulative and ever-increasing pressure of these relatively superior technological, economic, political, social and cultural forces, was not easy to resist or contain or even keep away from. For more or equally superior peoples like the Achaemenians, the Greeks, the Romans and few others who found themselves in India at later periods of our history, the question did not perhaps arise at all. They came in very small numbers and even those who chose to stay on, seem to have found it convenient, for some reason or other, to merge themselves altogether in the vast ocean of Indian humanity. But far the largest number of foreigners that entered India, in wave after wave and over a period of about 1500 years, was that of the Central Asian nomadic and pastoral-nomadic peoples whom I have already referred to. But the tribal economy of these peoples in their original habitats, was such as not to be able to sustain its people, which, along with others, was one of the main reasons for their periodic migrations to other warmer and more fertile lands. Once they were in India for two or three generations, they tended to give up their nomadic-pastoral way of life and settle down either as pastoral people or as agriculturists, and once they did so they were slowly but inevitably swallowed up by the Hindu social and economic organization and given a place in it, to the extent that they came to adopt the languages, religions and cultures of the Indo-Aryan speaking peoples and of Brahmanical Hinduism. One has only to remember what happened to the Sakas, the Kushanas, the Abhiras, the Jnatikas or Jats, the Gurjaras or Gujars, the Huns or Hunas and other allied peoples, many of whom are mentioned as *janas* in the list of people as given in the epics and the Puranas, in Buddhist and secular literature and in land grants and other historical documents. The Islamized Turks, Afghans, Iranians and Mongols were certainly able to maintain their religious and cultural identity, even to extend the frontiers of Muslim society within India, but let it be noted that they too had to succumb to the socio-economic organization of Brahmanical Hinduism, to the same production system as that of the *jati*. Indeed, once they had fallen into the production system of the *jati* it was no longer possible for them to resist its social implications. The same thing happened to the communities of people of the Tibeto-Burman stock who trudged into Assam and our north-eastern regions as late as thirteenth century. Those of the *janas* of foreign origin that came to exercise political authority as kings and as members of Royalty, nobility and the court, were given the *jati* status of Kshatriyas; those that eventually took to agriculture came to be self-stayed as Vaisyas; but the large majority had to be content with very low *jati* status in Hindu socio-economic hierarchy, including those like the Hunas who allowed themselves to be recruited as mercenary soldiers by regional rulers.

Yet the fact remains that large and small groups of the pastoral nomads I have referred to, did not settle down to agriculture; they retain to this day part of their pastoral-nomadic habits of life. They can still be found in considerable number in many places of Rajasthan and Gujarat and in smaller number in Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana and even Mashrastra, for instance.

The process of such integration and assimilation of foreign peoples and their ways of life seems to have been facilitated by Hinduism building up within itself, through experience of centuries of foreign contacts, a subtle and silent mechanism that enabled it to absorb shocks and to incorporate, slowly and steadily, as many myths and legends, words, images and symbols, gods and goddesses, items of food, dress and drink, etc., as it could without antagonizing the priestly and scholastic elements of the society, which would always make a show of resistance but accept them willy nilly in the long run by putting on all these a Hindu garb. Knowledgeable people alone know how much foreign material has gone into our lives, even into our myths and legends, our religious ideas and rituals, into the iconography of our gods and goddess. I would only present to you one example which may not be known to many of our archaeologists. Early Indian coinage of Saka-Kushana affiliation has made our archaeologists familiar with a non-Indian goddess whose name is given on the coins as Nana. This name in its Indian version has been transformed into Nasyna, Nayani, Naina, and all along with slopes and foot of the central and western Himalayas one would find small slowly temples dedicated to this goddess Nasyna, Nayani, Nasina and place names like Nayan, Nayni or Naina, the hill station Nainital being the most well-known amongst them. But I am not here to cite examples and give references; all that I am seeking to do is to interpret historically and sociologically, certain well-known facts of the Indian situation.

To come back to my main theme. I have referred to the *janas* of foreign origin in relation to the Hindu-Brahmanical social organisations. But what happened to the *jana* of indigenous origin that did not belong to the Indo-Aryan speaking stock and the Hindu-Brahmanical social organization of which *jati* was the pivot? To be able to find and answer to this question one must look at these *janas* from the point of view of their geographical locations and their socio-economic relations with their dominant Indo-Aryan speaking Hindu-Brahmanical neighbours.

Briefly, those *janas* who were defeated in war and taken prisoner, were immediately made economically and socially subservient altogether, being reduced to slaves, labourers and servants. Eventually, they came to be incorporated in the Hindu social organization, but seem to have been given a place at the lowest bottom, not very different from that of the Chandalas.

Then there were those who lived on the periphery of the Indo-Aryan speaking Hindu-Brahmanical peoples, or were surrounded by the later. These peoples were able to maintain somewhat their socio-religious, economic and



cultural identity. But because of their close locational proximity and the steady pressure of the larger and techno-economically more organized communities, they were obliged to enter into social and cultural and more importantly, economic contacts, communication and exchanges with their neighbours who were socially, culturally and economically more dominant. Through this process, initiated and controlled mainly by the latter, the non-*jati janas* were slowly but eventually obliged to give up their identity and succumb to the pressure. Inevitably they were led to a position where they had to enter the Indo-Aryan folds of Hindu-Brahmanical communities who in their turn and in the process, accepted and incorporated, especially at the rural-agricultural and folk level, not a few of the ideas, images, symbols, deities, rites, rituals, beliefs, customs, myths and legends of the erstwhile non-*jati janas*. This was no generosity on the part of the Hindu-Brahmanical order, as many culture-historians would like us to believe; any anthropologist or sociologist would tell such believers that here was just a simple sociological law in operation. However, the elements which I have just referred to are known in our tradition as *lokachara* and *desachara* as distinct from *sastrachara* or the priestly and textual commandments. These elements collectively go to constitute an important aspect of our rural-agricultural life, which is called *lokayatra*. The *janas* thus incorporated in Hindu-Brahmanical society Hutton has chosen to call 'tribal castes', and others have followed him. The number of such 'tribal castes' in our traditional lists of *janas*, is considerable, and it seems they were all given a very low grade in the Hindu social organization of *jati*, side by side with or even lower than those who were called *hina-jatis* and who were allowed the profession of *hina-silpas*, or crafts that were considered low in social estimation. Slowly and steadily, through more than two millennia of history, most of the so-called 'tribal castes' have been all but completely merged into the *jati* complex of Hindu society, and a smaller number, along with the lower order of the *jati* system, into the Muslim society as well. In each case they made their impact felt, especially in the Hindu-Brahmanical society to which they gave, a part from many other things, new forms and attributes to old traditional gods and goddesses, sometimes even new ones altogether. I have said that they were placed at very low levels of the vertical *jati* structure, which is a fact, by and large, but a few of their groups and individuals, by virtue of their gaining in economic status either through accumulation of land and more control over agricultural produce and/or through transactions in trade and commerce, were able to gain in social status as well. The process is still on before our eyes. But these no longer belong to the category of what in anthropological and sociological circles and in government papers, are called 'tribes', however under-developed may be their socio-economic position. In howsoever unsatisfactory manner it may be, they are now in the mainstream of our contemporary life and history.

Our concern at this seminar is not with these communities of people, but

with those *janas* who have not yet been drawn into this mainstream. Who are they? These are the *janas* who have been for centuries living far away from the mainstream, in the relatively isolated and inaccessible and less fertile and less agriculturally productive regions of forests, hills and mountains. And since they were living far away, they did not have much of an occasion to feel the pressure, until recent times, of the ever-advancing and more powerful social, economic and political forces. These were the *janas* that today lie all along our eastern and north-eastern frontiers and along the central and western Himalayas upto a height of 13,000 feet, *janas* that are predominantly of the Tibeto-Burman stock, except perhaps the Nagas and one or two other less known *janas*. This entire Himalayan area from our eastern frontiers to Ladakh is naturally a very sensitive one, and for more than one reason, a very significant one as well from the political and economic points of view. Many of these *janas* do not, for obvious reasons, make their appearance in history or in our historical geography before the nineteenth century, but many others do, for instance, the Nagas who are mentioned by Ptolemy in the second century AD, the Khasas, the Kiratas which seem to be almost a blanket name for all the Tibeto-Burman peoples in our eastern and north-eastern frontiers, the Kinnaras of the Kinnaur district of Himachal, the Kullutas of the Kulu valley, the Bhotas of the Bhutan-Sikkim area, and a few others whose names appear in the traditional *puranic* list of the *janas*. Our medieval Assamese, Bengali, Maithili and Hindi literature too gives us a few names of such peoples.

Then there is the whole belt along the old Paryiyatra, Vindhya and Suktimat hills which are collectively known to us as the Vindhyan ranges, stretching from almost the borders of Rajasthan to what are called the Chhotanagpur and Orissa hills which are but extensions of the Vindhyan ranges. All along these ranges and their slopes and feet and in the forests and valleys nursed by them live and have been living for centuries some of the oldest *janas* known to our history and culture: the Nishadas and the Savaras, the Kollas and Bhillas, for instance, and many other cognate and semi-cognate *janas* of whom history and historical geography have not kept any record. But we know from one of our epics, the *Ramayana*, that part at any rate of this area was the region that was called *ganasthana*, the land par excellence of the *janas*. Ethnically the majority of the *janas* seem to be of proto-Austroloid origin though a few of them speak languages of Dravidian affiliation.

Besides these two geographical areas of non-jati *janas* there is also a good number of them in smaller aggregates and dispersed in relatively smaller areas in almost all the southern states, especially in Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, and in Maharashtra. But these *janas* are all more or less in close contact and communication with socially and culturally, politically and economically more powerful communities belonging to the jati complex. And finally there are the isolated aggregates of relatively much less developed *janas* in the Andaman and Nicobar islands.

In relative security, seclusion and isolation, these communities of people have been living for centuries in varying degrees of agglomeration, and in varying levels of primary economy. They have come to acquire through centuries, the knowledge and experience of certain technologies, weaving, use of certain metals and certain crafts, and a primary low-level agriculture. They have also been living in varying levels and degrees of contacts and communications with the communities of peoples of the *jati* social organisation. But whatever the levels, degrees or stages, they were on the whole able to maintain their separate *jana* identity, each *jana* its own; each maintained its own socio-religious and cultural life, its political and economic organization, and this despite occasional disturbances created by their neighbour non-*jati* or intrusion by the more advanced and powerful *jati janas* from the plains, hills, plateaus and valleys near or far. But since such disturbances and intrusions were occasional natural calamities that just came and went, they could and did not seriously or permanently affect the usual, normal tenor of their social life and culture and the general pattern of their political and economic organization. History has left certain evidences of kings, princes, military and other adventures including merchants, making occasional penetration in the deep non-*jati jana* areas of Chhotanagpur and Orissa, of what was once Central India and of Madhya Pradesh. Buddhist and Hindu-Brahmanical missionaries and religious leaders also did so from time to time. It would be futile to argue that these contacts and communications meant nothing at all, but since, as I have said, these were not sustained, continuous and extensive and did not bring about nor aim at any basic social and economic change, these communities were able to maintain their own identity. Parenthetically, I may point out that Islam being fundamentally a city-oriented religion and Muslim royalty and the merchant class being urban in outlook, the Turkish, Afghan and Mughal rulers and their governors and officers were, by and large, not interested in the distant, relatively inaccessible regions inhabited by the communities of people we are speaking of, unless for mining and metallurgical interests as in the Chhotanagpur area, or for political and military exigencies as in the north-western frontiers of those days. They however knew of them, particularly of the nomad-pastoral communities of Sind, Baluchistan, Rajasthan and other areas. They distinguished these people from the rest of the population and even discriminated against them.

Indeed, not until the British appeared on the stage of Indian history and consolidated their position in the country, was any stir felt and experienced in the midst of these communities of people. Such stir was slowly and steadily brought about by several factors and forces which differed from region to region not only in their intensity but differed also in accordance with the colonial needs and aspirations of the British rulers.

First, for obvious reasons they had to 'open up' the entire country to be able to rule effectively and intensively, which obliged them to evolve



eventually an affective and extensive communication system including postal, telegraphic, roadway and railway services. Effective and an intensive rule called also for a common administrative system that aimed at drawing, as much as possible, the entire country within its orbit, obliging the administration to send its officers, police and army to the farthest and deepest depths of the land.

Secondly, for long, at least upto 1887, there remained the primary obligation of British mercantile colonialism, to make the military conquest as complete as from one end of the country to other, east to west, north to south, and if possible to go even beyond, to Burma in the east, Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet in the north, and Afghanistan in the north-west. This called for, internally a political and military policy that demanded maintenance of a strong thrust into all the resistance areas including the forest depths and hill-sides and hill tops. This policy affected the *janas* of the entire Vindhyan areas from Chhotanagpur and Orissa to what was until recently called Central India or Madhya Bharat. Externally, a foreign policy was also called for, a policy that involved diplomacy as well as military preparedness, and military adventures whenever necessary. The aim of this policy was to take the colonial empire of India safe from any kind of aggression from any foreign power, which meant the drawing of Burma, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and Afghanistan into the orbit of its influence and protection, and if possible, within the empire itself. This policy involved the *janas* of the entire Himalayan region including the right and left arm of the mountain range, from the Assam and Chittagong ranges to Hindukush and the Karakorum, a policy that opened up the entire region to public gaze and attention. This was sharpened further by a corollary policy dictated as much by politics and military considerations as by the felt need of having hill resorts on the Himalayas that could provide for the British rulers, their wives and children an escape from the summer heat of the north Indian plains and opportunities for the education of their children. Thus came into existence the series of hill-stations from Darjeeling to Muree, all on the lower Himalayas. British policy towards the peoples of these regions was of course somewhat different from that towards the *janas* of the interior regions, but I need not go into this question.

Thirdly, it follows from what I have said that the British administration found it necessary to send their engineers and their contractors, civil and military officials of all ranks and their provision suppliers, the traders and shopkeepers into all these inaccessible regions of the interior and the frontiers. All these elements, especially a good many of the lower ranks of Indian officials; contractors, middle men, provision suppliers, traders and shopkeepers, all of whom had to recruit their labour and servant force from amongst the local peoples but who themselves belonged to the Hindu Brahmanical community slowly but eventually came to develop their personal

and group vested interests in the localities wherein they were posted. Such interests were initially directed towards gaining local prestige and power which was not difficult to acquire, with the administration, police and army to support them, and finding ways and means of opening markets for consumer goods including luxury materials. Thus was a money economy introduced among the communities, slowly but surely. But what came to disturb these communities most is the land-hunger of these vested interests. Taking advantage of their vantage position they started acquiring lands and introducing cash-cropping through means foul rather than fair, lands that belonged to and were used by local communities. Ultimately this land-hunger affected not only their agriculture but also their hunting and fishing rights. The process has been on until very recent times, not only in the plains but also in hill areas.

Fourthly, following the administration and the army and all that these connoted, came the 'Messengers of Christ', the Christian missionaries belonging to more than one Church. They penetrated deep into many of these communities, converted a good many of them, brought education and health to them and opened them up to a modern world. Naturally, these missionaries, some of them very well-meaning and pious souls determined to save these communities of people from everlasting damnation, as they saw it, were all a part of the great establishment of the foreign rulers, and consciously or unconsciously their mission was directed towards upholding and strengthening that establishment.

Fifthly, administering these areas involved more or less close and detailed objective knowledge of these communities of peoples that we are speaking of, their social and religious life, their political and economic organization, their behaviour pattern and so on. Thus was initiated the series of studies that led to the foundation of what today we call Indian anthropology. The authors of these studies Dalton, Risley, Thurston, Ehtoven, Crooke, Russell—were all administrators. Their investigations involved deep probing into the lives and societies of these peoples and led eventually to the formulation of policies that were meant to guide the administration of these communities of people.

The cumulative effect of these policies was far-reaching. Within a period of one hundred years were brought about in the life of these communities what may be called tremendous changes. The very fact that they were exposed to a wider life, a quicker tempo, a modern legal and administrative system, and altogether a different way of life the pressure of which was ever on the increase, meant a great disturbance in communities, economic, social and psychological. The first signs of such stirrings and disturbances started making themselves manifest already by about the second quarter of the nineteenth century, and in the civil disturbances that great 1857 rebellion, a fairly good number of these communities of people, spread over wide area, found themselves involved. Even later, in the last quarter of the nineteenth and first four decades of the twentieth century sporadic disturbances among them classes

with the authorities were frequent, and recent history has kept record of many of these. Immediate and remote causes of such clashes and disturbance with their social and religious customs and practices which were considered barbarous by the authorities, introduction of cash cropping in areas of shifting and low-level cultivation, alienation of their community lands, their exploitation by landholders, money-lenders, middle-men, police and forest and other officials, and their claim for higher social status, an attempt which was not unoften resisted by the *jati* Hindus. Indeed, by about the third and fourth decades of this century, in many of these communities signs were evident enough that a new self-consciousness, consciousness of their social, political and economic rights and privileges, was introducing new and disturbing elements into their over-all life and activity.

Today, after more than a century of uneasiness and unrest amongst these communities of people when one looks back it seems curious that this new and important feature on the periphery of the mainstream of our life, was hardly ever taken note of by our social and political thinkers and leaders of even the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Surendranath Banerjee was unaware of it, so were Aurobindo Ghosh and Bipin Chandra Pal, Mahadev Govinda Ranade, Gopal Krishna Gokhale and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. The attention of the Indian National Congress was never drawn to this growing socio-political problem, though the question of the lower and depressed orders and the untouchables of Hindu society had started receiving attention from about the 1880's. Not until Gandhi entered the stage of Indian life was this matter looked at as a national issue. His concern for the *advaitis* or *admitatis* as much as for the untouchables and the depressed orders of Hindu society, the institutions which he helped to bring into existence and what he himself did towards the furtherance of their cause of social and economic uplift, are all too well-known to need recounting.

But the legacy of history seems to have been pursuing us. From the number of so-called anthropological studies brought forth by the British administrators, caste and 'tribe' understood in the concepts with which they were familiar, seem to have been an obsession with them, and unfortunately, with us as well. They knew too well that India had been aspiring for nationhood, and the whole burden of their argument seems to have been that the people of India could not weld themselves into a nation so long as these two major hurdles were not removed. How true they were! But it was not to their interest to remove them; by their policy they only accentuated them and encouraged the divisive forces. Some of the so-called 'tribes' they chose, for administrative reasons and in the name of 'law and order', to brand as 'criminal tribes', and as late as 1935, created the remarkable phrase and social category called 'scheduled tribes' along with another called 'scheduled castes', two phrases and concepts that we inherited from the 1935 Constitution and chose, in our wisdom, to incorporate in the Constitution of the independent and sovereign



## Republic of India !

This has been unfortunate and unwise to my mind. It has conditioned our attitude towards these communities of peoples and our approach towards the solution of their problems which are theirs as much as the rest of the Indian population

## IV

What I have sought to do is to place before you my interpretation of the historical background of what we call the 'Tribal Situation in India', how it came about and how we inherited a situation that started taking the shape and form it has assumed today.

The entire burden of my argument from the point of view of Indian nationalism, has been that

- (a) The communities of peoples we are concerned with in this seminar, are not 'tribes' but *janas* or peoples, just like peoples of other territorial and cultural regions of India, the Punjabis, the Andhras, the Keralas, the Tamils, the Bengalis etc., for instance. What distinguishes the former from the latter, is the socio-economic system of *jati* to which the latter still belong. *Jati* is not caste nor is it just a socio-religious system; it is also an economic system, hereditarily and hierarchically organized according to groups recruited by birth.
- (b) Indian history and culture have not been unconscious of the need for integration of the communities of what we have learnt to call 'tribal' peoples, but integration in practice in history meant incorporation of these communities of people into the body social by drawing them into the fold of the *jati* system and placing them at different hierarchical levels of the system, generally at the lower levels. The process was somewhat naturalistic, and hence a slow, patient and gradual one, but through the centuries it succeeded in drawing a very large number of these communities of people into the mainstream of Indian life and culture, transforming them and being itself transformed by them. But today, because of the introduction and functioning of a new production system, the *jati* system is on the first lap of disintegration. The question of drawing these communities into the *jati* system does not therefore arise any longer. Rather the question to my mind, seems to be as to how we draw them into the new techno-economy that is bound to replace the *jati* economy.
- (c) The British colonial-imperial policy of war, conquest, internal law and order administration, land tenure, diplomacy and external security, coupled with the policy of the Christian missions in India, went eventually to expose these communities of people to the much quicker tempo of modern life, to a new legal system and administr-

ation and to a new economic system altogether, bringing about stresses and tensions amongst these peoples, which nobody seems to help of anthropology as understood in the early decades of this century in the Indian context. The suggestions that came out seem to have only sharpened the stresses and tensions, which in their turn, indirectly helped to bring the entire problem into focus.

- (d) Then came the Second World War, the Japanese threat in the north-eastern frontiers and the British army, a few of these communities joining the army and going far out of their closed areas which together led to the further opening up of some of these areas.
- (e) Independent India inherited the situation which had in it the implantation of divisive seeds of 'criminal tribes' and 'criminal tribes' was replaced by the phrase 'denotified tribes'; it hardly changed the situation. The concept of 'scheduled tribes' is still with us.
- (f) Independence, democracy and adult franchise have released many hitherto submerged social forces; these forces are now at play in many areas of our social, political, economic and cultural life. We have been witnessing some of these forces at work in the communities of people we are here concerned with. Basically it is in part a search for self-determination in a new social order. The old order of theirs is in a fast process of disintegration.

The rest is for you to study and analyse, and to find out ways and means as to how to meet the situation. The basic problem, I would say, even at the risk of repeating myself more than once, is one of drawing these communities of people into the mainstream of our life. How should we and they do it? For, this is a two-way traffic; the task is as much ours as theirs, that is, of those who are not yet in the mainstream of life. They must also realize that it is no longer possible, nor good for them to stand aside and aloof. Are we to follow the traditional old Indian process of slow, patient, gradual integration? Time is pressing; do we have time enough to pursue such a process? Contrarily, can we telescope the process so as to be able to bring about a quick change in the situation? Would such telescoping be judicious? The process of integration is a naturalistic one; one can such a natural process by trying to cut down time. Can one eliminate time altogether, relatively speaking?

At the very outset I said that the main problem in regard to the so-called 'tribal' communities is one of drawing them into the mainstream of Indian life and tribal communities, especially among those on our north-eastern borders, nourish the apprehension that being drawn into the mainstream of contemporary Indian life would mean their complete absorption by the larger and more dominant society of which by far the largest in number are Hindus. Looking at the whole past history of the method of 'tribal' absorption adopted by the Hindu society, this fear is perhaps not altogether without some reason,

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one must admit. I must therefore at once try to disabuse the minds of such 'tribal' communities of any such apprehension. When we speak of integrating such 'tribal' communities into the mainstream of our contemporary life we are not at all thinking in terms of the old traditional method of absorption. That method was primarily based on a traditional mode of production and a productive organization which was built into the *jati* system, otherwise known as the 'caste' system. India today is committed to the building up of not only a 'casteless' society, but she has also given up the older mode of production and productive organization, and taken to an altogether new method and a new economic system. Any consideration in the contemporary context, of the traditional Hindu method of tribal absorption is, therefore, sheer madness to my mind. In the present context this is simply anachronistic.

Integration in the present context means, to my mind, four things. *First*, this sovereign independent republic of ours which is called India, is a territorial unit with well-defined boundaries. When we speak of India it is this India that we refer to, not a Hindu India or a Muslim or Christian India, the India which as everyone knows, has a constitution of its own with a declared policy which is secular. Within this territorial unit there are many administrative regions where for more reasons than one there may be dissatisfaction, unrest and even disturbances. While attempts can and should certainly be made to resolve and contain them, the Constitution of India and Union and State governments set up under that Constitution, cannot certainly accommodate a situation in which any of the constituents of the Union should be demanding secession from the sovereign territorial unit. *Secondly*, India has accepted/adopted a democratic way of life, the principles and procedures of which have been built into the Constitution. This democracy is based on adult suffrage, which, to my mind, is the most revolutionary step that India chose to take to bring about rapid social change in our society. This democratic way of life recognizes certain fundamental rights for every citizen of India and certain directive principles for the guidance of government and administration. *Thirdly*, India has made a full commitment of the idea of secularism, a concept which may not be sought to be understood in terms of the dictionary meaning of the word. According to the intention of our Constitution, religion is altogether left to the individual and his religious community; they can do whatever they like so long as their activities do not infringe upon the duties and obligations of persons belonging to other religions and of those of the State and the Government. *Fourthly*, India has also committed herself to a new economic system which is described as aiming at socialism of socialistic pattern of society. This economic system is committed to progressive industrialization as the major means of production directed towards rapid social change.

From our point of view these four, namely the sovereign, independent territorial unity of India, democracy, secularism and planned economy of which industrialization is the means and socialism is the goal, are the four



tributaries that constitute the mainstream of contemporary Indian life. Any citizen of India who is still standing aside or away from the mainstream or who is thinking in such terms, should be drawn into it with a sense of participation that would engender in him or her a sense of involvement.

This is all that I wanted to convey when I spoke in terms of drawing the so-called 'tribal' peoples into the mainstream of Indian life. Nothing more, but nothing less. India has launched herself on a tremendous experiment towards building up a new society based on a new economic and political system. It is a challenge to all those who call themselves citizens of India. Let us all, 'tribals' and non-'tribals', take up this challenge and involve ourselves in the great experiment that is taking place before our eyes. There are stresses and tensions, worries and anxieties without doubt. Let us all try to resolve them.

I have finished but not before I have tried your patience out, I am afraid. I hope you would in your generosity excuse me. Everyone has his illusion; my illusion has been that it was my duty to provide the conceptual and historical backdrop to the meaningful and purposeful debate to which we are all looking forward.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

# Chairman's Address

M. N. SRINIVAS

I thank Prof. Ray for inviting me to take the Chair at the inaugural session of this important Seminar on "The Tribal Situation in India".

Prof. Ray in his role as the Director of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study has organized several seminars on subjects which are of central and urgent concern to the country and its leaders. The Indian Institute of Advanced Study is not only a haven for scholars but also a meeting place between them and politicians and administrators. It is an exchange which is vital to both—I use the term "vital" deliberately. Without such an exchange both get enfeebled. No longer can the country afford to keep these classes apart.

The Department of Sociology and Centre of Advanced Study in Sociology in Delhi University started, two years ago, at the suggestion of the University Grants Commission, a special cell on the North-Eastern Hill Areas. Dr. R.D. Sanwal, Reader in the Department, is actually in charge of this Cell. Last October, he and I, organized a Summer School in Shillong on "Human Problems in the Development of the North-Eastern Hill Areas". It was attended by academics and political leaders, and Dr. Sanwal and I both found it a refreshing and rewarding experience. And when I came to know that Prof. Ray was thinking of a Seminar on "The Tribal Situation in India." I suggested to him that we may join forces. Prof. Ray readily and enthusiastically agreed, and thanks to him, we have an opportunity to examine here problems of NEFA and other regions in the context of the country as a whole. I may mention in this connection that this is the first time that a university department is a co-sponsor of a seminar with the I.I.A.S. I am certain that every right-minded person will welcome such cooperation, and that it will become a regular feature of the Institute's activity. It will enhance the academic reach and utility of the I.I.A.S. and it will be extremely beneficial to university departments located in different parts of the country.

I must express my sincere thanks to the University Grants Commission for making this collaboration possible between the Department of Sociology, Delhi University, and the I.I.A.S.

I have no desire to trespass on the inaugural lecture but I cannot help stating here that it is a matter of surprise—and even some distress—that a seminar of this kind was not organized many years ago. The blame for this

must be shared by both anthropologists and the government: anthropologists have tended to view the problems of individual tribes and regions in isolation—a hangover of colonial anthropology—and the government on its side has ignored Indian anthropologists, especially those located in universities. It has not shown enough appreciation of the need for systematic information on the hundreds of tribes situated in various parts of the country. Only when a tribal problem reaches an explosive point does it look beyond the circle of men immediately in change. Systematic information is vital to the success of planned change among all sections of our population and especially among the Scheduled Tribes and Scheduled Castes. Such information can only be collected by properly trained anthropologists and sociologists. It cannot be a part-time activity of a harassed and over-worked government official, however, conscientious and able he may be.

In other words, anthropological and sociological research can no longer be regarded as something peripheral or irrelevant to the crucial pursuit of the twin objectives of economic development and political stability. It is an integral part of that pursuit, and failure to take note of this fact will have far-reaching negative consequences. Funds must be provided to university departments of sociology and anthropology for relevant Ph.D. and post-doctoral research. The staffing pattern in university departments should enable teachers to do field-research periodically—field work to the social scientists is what the laboratory is to the natural scientist. Finally, the Anthropological Survey of India must be so organized that it gives top priority to the study of problems of social and cultural change among tribals, and it should establish regular liaison with university departments.

It is not only an honour but also a pleasure to take the chair at this inaugural address especially as my distinguished colleague and friend, Prof. S.C. Dube, is delivering the inaugural address. Prof. Dube is well-known to anthropologists and sociologists all over the world, and I congratulate Prof. Ray on his choice for the inaugural address. Prof. Dube has had firsthand research experience among tribals and peasants, and during the years he spent in the Government of India, he enhanced his awareness of the administration and policy implications of planned social change among these sections of our population. I must also not fail to mention the fact that Prof. Dube's is not a case of brain-drain from the university to the bureaucracy—happily for Indian anthropology and sociology, he decided to return to his academic post in Sagar to teach and to research and to guide and stimulate his students and colleagues. I hope other sociologists and anthropologists will follow him in having firsthand experience of administration and policy dimensions of the tribal situation in India, and then return to their universities to continue teaching and research. I feel that the time is ripe for practising this kind of academic nomadism—or trans humance, if you would like to call it that. From the little I know of the

Government of India and its functioning I find today sharply increased awareness of the importance and urgency of associating sociologists and anthropologists in the solution of the many complex and baffling problems which confront the country today. I now request Prof. Dube to deliver the inaugural address.



# Inaugural Address

S.C. DUBE

In the turbulent and troubled decades that followed the attainment of national independence, the fibre of India's nationhood has been put to severe tests. The recurrent convulsions caused by communalism, regionalism, linguism, and casteism differed in their intensity and duration, but their consequences were sufficiently unsettling to raise doubts in many minds—both at home and abroad—about India's viability and durability as a nation. Even the traumatic experience of two wars—limited in their scale but shattering in their impact—failed to develop, to strengthen, and to stabilize national perspectives; resurgence of nationalism, generated by the crises, was shortlived, and was soon overpowered by strong currents of parochialism.

Tribal sub-nationalism—dormant in some parts and explosive in others—contributes to the uneasy mosaic so characteristic of contemporary India. Evidence of simmering discontent is all-too-clear. Dark and ominous clouds are gathering on the tribal horizon: a cloudburst, followed by a tornado, may come any day.

The confrontation between the tribals and the non-tribals is not a phenomenon of recent origin. The long history of their interaction has been one of tension and conflict. To begin with the tribal way of life contended for a position of dominance, but in the unequal fight it had to reformulate its goals and to struggle first for co-existence (on a basis of equality) and later for bare survival. In the process there was considerable adjustment and accommodation. The emergent dominant ethos bore unmistakable evidence of having absorbed elements from the country's tribal heritage. In the reverse direction, the tribal ethos also did not remain completely uninfluenced by the pan-Indian pattern of life was gradually consolidating itself. But the fusion of the two ways of life was never complete: some tribal groups were assimilated and lost their tribal identities; others determinedly sought to retain their diacritical marks and worked for the preservation of their cultural self-image. In the plural society that emerged many tribal groups retained a measure of cultural autonomy, but accepted—in different degrees—the “broker institutions” (such as national administrative, political, and economic institutions) that provided the bases of integration to the total social structure and linked local activities to the wider spheres of societal activities. The acceptance of these institutions, however, was not without resistance. Each

wave of alien immigrants into the traditionally tribal territories had to encounter tribal hostility; introduction of nearly every element of the broker institutions met with varying degrees of protest. Time healed some of the wounds caused to tribal self-respect and their cultural autonomy, but some of them turned into festering sores partly because of unyielding tribal pride and partly because of the newcomers' arrogance that made them insensitive and unresponsive to tribal sentiments. Changing social, political, and economic contexts continued to alter prevailing tribal-non-tribal equations and upset their delicate equilibrium. This generated new passions and conflicts. In many predominantly tribal areas the situation could never really stabilize itself. When India became free the bonds between the tribal and the non-tribal groups were tenuous and fragile. They operated within a loosely-structured but common framework. Suspicion and distrust prevented them from forging lasting bonds of cooperation and interdependence. An uneasy co-existence prevailed.

In respect of law and order the British rulers had maintained a stern posture throughout their sojourn in India, and even in tribal areas they enforced them with an iron hand. Their attitude to them otherwise was paternalistic and protective. The policy of exclusion or partial exclusion of tribal areas reduced economic competition between the tribals and the non-tribals, and thus minimized the principal cause of conflict between them. Indirectly it also helped the tribes to pursue their distinctive life-ways relatively undisturbed by powerful currents of change having an alien origin. But this policy could not eliminate all competition, nor could it preclude all ideas and innovations foreign to the tribal style of life. Friction between the tribals and the non-tribals persisted, though on a restricted scale. Culture change did come about, but in dribblets. Unsupported by dynamic and purposeful social action, this policy resulted in perpetuation of primitiveness. The tribes, thus, were precluded from having a foretaste or ever a vision of things that go into raising the standards of living and in adding to material comfort and well-being. Their insulation from the main currents of Indian life helped the tribes in preserving their traditions, but at the same time it also hindered the growth of competence in them to face growing competition in a wider society and to meet of the challenges of the contemporary world.

Free India has continued to offer a measure of special protection to the tribes, but in the rapidly changing contexts of national life they have been catapulted their relative isolation into the vortex of competitive politics. An articulate and effective political elite has emerged in several tribal areas. It has not only acquired a taste for politics, but is also vigorously contributing to the emergence of a new political idiom. It is not constrained by the conventional rules of the game; it makes its own rules as the play progresses. This elite rejects the solicitude of those in power and has no use for their condescending benevolence. It is conscious of tribal rights, and is capable of

making shrewd and calculated moves to gain their acceptance. Where such an elite does not exist political parties—national, regional or local—are moving in to fill the vacuum. Tribal problems are being politicized increasingly. A sizeable part of the current manifestation of tribal unrest in India is undoubtedly the product of manipulative politics.

Today the entire gamut of tribal problems has to be seen in the political perspective. Politics has emerged as the principal avenue through which they look forward to finding solution to their many problems that have persisted in one form or other through centuries. In the last two decades some of these problems have acquired a sharper edge. There have been many new additions to the long inventory of tribal needs, for the tribes also have undergone a limited revolution of rising aspirations. They are aware that in contemporary politics competitive pressures determine one's place and share in the decision-making processes. By being a part of this process, they feel, they can ensure not only the preservation of their self-respect but also gain proportionately larger share of scarce resources for economic development. In many areas they have discarded the satellite role they have played so far in the political process. There has been a noticeable shift in their political attitudes and strategies: from politics of compliance and affirmation, they have moved over to the politics of pressure and protest. Where a tribal elite has not emerged political parties—old and new—are moving in. In their efforts to capture the minds—as also the votes—of the tribals, they are adopting a radical postures and fomenting militant agitations. The fires of discontent are being fed by interested tribal and non-tribal agencies. The keg appears to be charged with dynamite. An explosion may come any day.

The politicization of the tribal scene, in a sense, is a natural and logical culmination of the democratic process. The political culture of the tribes is undergoing a radical transformation.

In their orientation to the cognitive, the affective, and the evaluative aspects of the total political system there is a definite shift. The tribes are emerging out of their "subject political culture", in which they did not question the validity or usefulness of higher political decisions and visualized their own role as one of compliance. In other words, they concerned themselves largely with the output functions of the political system and were not bothered about its input processes. But the emerging political culture is disturbing in several aspects. It appears to be a cross between what Almond and Verba would call "parochial political culture" and "participant political culture". It is oriented more to sub-national—tribal—identities than to a broader national identity. Where interests of the smaller unit and the larger unit clash, the tendency is to ignore the latter. This constriction of perspectives, resulting in exclusive or excessive focus on purely regional, local, or tribal interest and on their solution un-linked with broader national interests, imparts parochial overtones to the emerging political culture. The protagonists of this trend

can well retort that they are not the only ones in the country to adopt this strategy, and the realities of the contemporary social situation will be on their side. They have proved themselves adept pupils of seasoned political masters and have learned the game from them to the last detail. On the other hand, there also is some welcome evidence of the emergence of a participant political culture in which the people take a active interest in framing issues and formulating politics, question the validity and usefulness of higher political decisions when necessary, and suggest correctives to what are or what appear to be unjust decisions and politics. Thus, they develop a concern both for the output and input processes of the political system. This is a wholesome trend and it can be channelized to strengthen India's roots of democracy. But the uneasy mix of parochial and participant elements in this intermediate type of political culture raises as many problems as it solves.

Harmonization of national and tribal interests, thus, emerges as the key issue. Such harmonization, although its need is imperative, cannot be attained easily. The issues implicit in the problem touch extremely sensitive areas and even the slightest mishandling of any aspect of them is likely to evoke violent passions. In the absence of objective and penetrating analyses of the issues it is difficult even to grasp the true dimensions of the problem.

It may sound trite and tautological, but nation-ness and nation-building go together. The bi-faceted political trend visible in tribal India today is both conjunctive and disjunctive: on the one hand a new tribal solidarity is being forged, and on the other the tribes as a category are being alienated from the rest of the country's population. Perhaps in no other period of India's history had there emerged such a distinct and strong tribal image. Tribalness is now a powerful political factor, and to exploit its full potential tribal groups at different techno-economic levels and representing different cultural ethos and patterns are being linked politically. Insofar as this trend minimizes inter-tribal friction and rivalries it is to be welcomed, but where it separates from the rest of the country those whom it has united, it injures the cause of national integration and distorts the perspective for nation-building. Separatist politics, often resulting in mass violence and senseless destruction of the infrastructure of development, befuddles economic and social issues and makes their solution increasingly difficult. But in recent years the short-run payoff of the politics of agitation and of separatism has been so great—at least to a few if not to the many—that it is difficult to seal off the tribal areas from their pernicious influence. How can one expect greater political restraint from the tribals, who are recent entrants to the national political arena, when more mature parties and politicians throw all caution to the wind and involve these proud, sensitive, and volatile people in agitations and struggles aimed at furthering their personal or party interests? Surely, the more mature political sector must first demonstrate greater political discipline.



The tribal situation in India cannot be viewed in isolation from the wider contexts of the themes and strategies operating in national life. The political maladies of contemporary India can no longer be dismissed simply as the teething troubles of an infant democracy; they are deep-rooted and widely ramified. A core of values and symbols shared alike by all Indians has yet to be evolved, and a minimal consensus on the principal goals of the society as well as on the most appropriate avenues for the realization of these goals will have to be achieved. The polity will be wrecked if political constraints and discipline are not strengthened. Reality will have to be invested into the widely publicized ideals of "unity in diversity" and "live and let live" that are believed to characterize the genius of Indian society. The situation looks horrendous, but adequate human will; and determination can meet its challenge. But let it be understood clearly that the tribal problem cannot be isolated from the broader national problems. Its solution will have to form part of the overall strategy for the regeneration of Indian society and polity. Tribal discontent cannot be treated symptomatically; the malady will just not respond to palliatives.

The emphasis on the necessity of relating tribal problems to national contexts and on linking trends in tribal India to trend pervading the entire society does not even remotely imply that there are no problems which are uniquely tribal. Undoubtedly many such problems exist, and they need to be explored in all their regional variations. The sources of tribal discontent, for example, merit analytical treatment in an historical perspective. The patterns of tribal-nontribal relationships and the operation of conflict-resolving mechanism, similarly, call for a study in depth. Intra- and inter-tribal cultural processes, such as revivalism, nativism, vitalism, syncretism, eschatologism, millenarianism, and other cognate trends also to be documented and analyzed. Tribal response, at different stages, to what have been called the broken institutions, is yet another theme on which it would be rewarding to have carefully gathered and systematically analyzed information. The phenomenon of tribals living and working in a non-tribal urban-industrial environment—described variously as "urban tribalism", "super tribalism", or "ethnicity" in the African context—has remained virtually untouched in this country; although it represents an important new examine why many development projects launched with great fanfare in tribal areas failed to yield the results they had promised. In such studies the main focus will have to be on incompatibilities between innovation and culture, on communication gaps, on bureaucratic inadequacies and dysfunctions, and on the soundness or the unsoundness of the strategies of developmental planning and implementation. The insights gained from such studies will be a positive help towards a realistic assessment of the tribal situation and towards meaningful planning for tribal development. In a propitious climate and with the support of a resolute leadership, it would be possible to make a purposive use of this knowledge.

The tribes have to find for themselves a place in Indian society consistent with their conception of honour, but this must be done without detriment to the integrity or the strength of India as a nation. Tribal competence has to be developed to enable them to face the growing competition of a developing society and to meet the challenges of an uncertain future. Constraints have to be built into the idiom and style of tribal politics. And at the same time the adequacy of India as a nation has to be developed and strengthened to enable it to solve its problems, and if necessary to contain the tide of separatism and to meet all threats to its integrity. Only by pooling out intellectual resources, insights, and experience can we suggest how this can be done.

Part II

PAPERS





A  
REGIONAL TRIBAL SITUATION  
Perspectives And Problems



# Tribal Demography: A Preliminary Appraisal

B.K. ROY BURMAN

According to the Census of 1961, out of the total population of 439,072,582 in the country as many as 29,879,249 belong to the category of Scheduled Tribes. They constitute 6.87% of the population of the country. There are about 450 communities throughout the country in the list of scheduled tribes; some of them are sub-tribes of larger tribes.

Among the scheduled tribes, the most numerically are the Gonds of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh; the Bhils of Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh, and the Santhals of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal. The first two tribes have the strength of about four million each; the last one also has a numerical strength of more than three million. The smallest tribal community, which is receiving considerable attention at the national level, is the Andamanese, with the strength of only 19.

The tribal communities living in different regions may be divided into five territorial groupings, taking into account their historical, ethnic and socio-cultural relations, as follows:

- (a) North-East India comprising Assam, NEFA, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura;
- (b) Sub-Himalayan region of North and North-West India comprising the Northern Sub-montane districts of Uttar Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh as a whole including the areas recently transferred from Punjab;
- (c) Central and East India comprising West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh;
- (d) South India comprising Madras, Kerala and Mysore; and
- (e) Western India comprising Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra.

The statewise percentage of the scheduled tribe population to the total population is furnished in Table 1.

Except for Nagaland, NEFA, LMA Islands, Dadra and Nagar Haveli Manipur and Tripura, the Scheduled Tribes do not constitute more than 25% of the population. The data give an impression that the tribal people constitute only a small proportion of the population of India. This is, however, only one side of the picture. There is another too. When examined upto the level of *taluk* (sub-division) or equivalent administrative unit, it is found that there are

TABLE I

States/Union Territories	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe Population to the Total Population
Andhra Pradesh	4
Assam	17
Bihar	9
Gujarat	13
Jammu & Kashmir	—
Kerala	1
Madhya Pradesh	21
Madras	1
Maharashtra	6
Mysore	1
Orissa	24
Punjab	—
Rajashtan	12
Uttar Pradesh	—
West Bengal	6
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	22
Delhi	—
Himachal Pradesh	8
Laccadiv, Minicoy & Amindivi Islands(LMA)	97
Manipur	32
Tripura	32
Dadra & Nagar Haveli	88
Goa, Daman & Diu	—
Pondicherry	—
North-East Frontier Agency	89
Nagaland	93

Source: *Census of India, 1961.*

altogether 285 *taluks* or equivalent administrative units in India where the Scheduled Tribes constitute 50% or more of the total population. Distribution of these *taluks* in various states and Union Territories is given in Table 2.

About 50% of the scheduled tribes of India live in pockets where they are the majority people.

The scheduled tribes dispersed all over the country, differ from one another in racial traits, language, social organization and cultural pattern etc. The dominant racial type among the scheduled tribe communities, except those living in the sub-Himalayan belt, is the proto-Austroloid. In the sub-Himalayan Belt, mongoloid racial type is dominant. Everywhere has been inter-mixture



TABLE 2

State/Union Territory	No. of taluks where scheduled tribes constitute 50% or more of the total population	No. of scheduled caste tribes in taluks	Scheduled tribes population in the taluks as p.c. to the total tribal population of the State
Andhra	6	320664	24.21
Assam	18	1097707	53.16
Bihar	67	2505136	59.58
Gujarat	28	1875272	68.08
Madhya Pradesh	38	3906285	58.49
Madras	1	13914	5.52
Maharashtra	14	798204	33.30
Orissa	65	2567357	60.78
Punjab	2	14132	100.00
West Bengal	2	63124	3.07
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	2 (Islands)	14103	99.87
Himachal Pradesh	5 (Tehsils)	60113	55.56
Laccadive, Minicoy & Amindivi Islands	10 (Islands)	23391	100.00
Manipur	5 (Sub-division)	232753	93.46
Nagaland	9 (Sub-division)	343697	100.00
Tripura	13	199032	55.28
India	285	14034885	46.38

Source: *Census of India, 1961.*

with other racial types, particularly, the Mediterranean type. A negrito substratum is suspected in some parts of the country. The tribal languages in India belong to all the major language families: the Austric, the Dravidian and the Tibeto-Chinese families are the dominant ones. The strength of the speakers of the tribal languages is 14,132,503. On the assumption that all the speakers of the tribal languages belong to tribal communities, they constitute 47.30% of the total tribal population of the country. It is obvious that rest of the tribals share with their non-tribal neighbours, the same languages, as their mother tongue. Bilingualism prevails among the tribal population. Persons speaking one or more subsidiary languages, in addition to their mother tongue, constitute 15.73% of the total tribal population in the country.

The bulk of tribal population regard themselves as Hindus. The distribution of the tribals by religion is as follows:

TABLE 3

Religion	Number	Percentage to the total Population
Hindu	26,710,428	89.39
Christian	1,653,570	5.53
Buddhist	100,243	0.34
Muslims	61,233	0.21
Others	1,353,775	4.53

Source: *Census of India, 1961.*

All of those who returned themselves as Hindu during the 1961 Census do not stand incorporated in the Hindu social order. In terms of their orientation towards Hindu social order, the tribals can be classified as follows:

- (a) Incorporated in the Hindu social order;
- (b) Positively oriented towards Hindu social order;
- (c) Negatively oriented toward the Hindu social order; and
- (d) Indifferent towards the Hindu social order.

The tribes like Bhumij, Bhil, etc., can be considered incorporated in the Hindu social order; they have accepted caste structure and can hardly be differentiated from the neighbouring Hindu peasantry. The tribes like Santal, Oraon, Munda, Gond, etc., can be considered positively oriented towards the Hindu social order. Though the bulk of their population have not been included in the caste frame, they have to a considerable extent, adopted the symbols, ethos and the world view of their Hindu neighbours. The tribal communities like the Mizos and Nagas, can be considered to be negatively oriented towards Hindu social order. They definitely reject caste as a frame for social organization. Most of the tribal communities of NEFA can be considered to be indifferent to the Hindu social order; they are not aware of the tenets of Hinduism. Many of them eat beef and the moral constraints and system of pollution and purity do not appear to bear any resemblance to those of the Hindus.

There is an impression in some quarters that some tribal communities are decaying. There is hardly any evidence in favour of this impression. The sex ratio of the general population, the scheduled caste and the scheduled tribes would show that, with reverence to the numerical growth-potential, the scheduled tribes are in an advantageous position as compared to others.

TABLE 4

Category of Population	Sex Ratio (No. of females per 1000 males)
General	941
Scheduled Caste	957
Schedule Tribe	987

Source: *Census of India, 1961*

According to some demographers distribution of population by age-groups is an important index of the quality of the population in terms of whether it is progressive, balanced or decaying. It, however, appears that consideration of the end product without exact information about the changes in the birth rate, death rate, in-migration and out-migration may be misleading. However, a comparative statement giving the age and sex distribution of the general population, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes is furnished below for what it is worth.

Average percentage of literacy among the scheduled tribes of India is 9% as against 24% among the general population and 10% among the scheduled castes. But among the tribal communities there is a wide range of variation in the level of literacy. There are at the one end, communities such as Malapandaram, Sulung, etc., with hardly any literate person among them; at the other end, there are communities like the Lushasis with about 50% literacy. Considered state-wise, the level of literacy varies from 4% in Andhra Pradesh to 27% in Manipur.

A comparative study of the literatures with reference to educational level brings out the backwardness of the tribal population into sharper focus.

There is another index of continued educational backwardness of the scheduled tribe. In the 1961 Census, information about the activities of non-working population was collected. Among the general population, 16.55% of the non-workers were full time students; the corresponding figures among the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes were 9.17% and 3.46% respectively. The percentages of the male and female full-time students among the non-workers of the general population scheduled caste and scheduled tribe population are indicated in table 8.

The salient feature of the scheduled tribe activity may briefly be described:

First, as against the national average of 43%, 57% of scheduled tribes of the population are economically active. The corresponding figure among the scheduled castes is 47%. On the one hand, it is a measure of comparatively low dependency ratio among the scheduled tribes; on the other, it seems to indicate the comparatively low capacity of the scheduled tribe workers to support large number of students. The distribution of population, by industrial

TABLE 5

Category of Population	0-14		15-44		45+	
	Total	Male : Female	Total	Male : Female	Total	Male : Female
General	41.03	40.92	41.14	42.89	43.21	15.92 16.19 15.65
Sch. Caste	40.86	41.38	40.42	42.56	43.91	15.92 16.06 15.77
Sch. Tribe	42.18	42.49	41.86	42.85	43.80	14.50 14.66 14.34

Source: *Census of India, 1961.*

TABLE 6

Percentage Total literate	Literate (without level)			Primary or Junior Basic			Matric and above		
	General Population	Sch. Caste Tribes	Sch. Tribes	General Population	Sch. Caste Tribes	Sch. Tribes	General Population	Sch. Caste Tribes	Sch. Tribes
100	100	100	100	62.96	72.80	73.67	29.25	24.53	25.21
							7.79	2.67	1.12



TABLE 7

Category of Population	Male	Female
General population	30.05	8.01
Scheduled Caste	18.14	3.35
Scheduled Tribe	15.99	4.12

Source: *Census of India 1961*.

categories of workers is furnished below:

As against the national average of 73%, 91% of the scheduled tribe workers are engaged in the primary sector of the sector of economy related to the exploitation of the national resources. The secondary sector to the sector related to manufacture, accounts for 11% of the total workers and only 3% of the tribal workers. The tertiary sector or the servicing sector accounts for 16% of the total workers and only 5% of the tribal workers.

The foregoing data bring out the undeveloped condition of the tribal economy. These show that the primary sector has failed to have significant multiplication effect in the secondary and tertiary sectors. In other words, the data relating to the distribution of tribal workers in different industrial categories underscore the low participation of the tribals in the total economy of the nation and also the low level of the out-turn of the primary sector.

One of the main reasons for the low out-turn of the primary sector is this. The scheduled tribes generally live in inhospitable terrains where the productivity of the soil is low. Shifting cultivation and dry upland cultivation are the important sources of livelihood. It goes without saying that such modes of production hardly allow any scope for the generation of surplus which can be invested for higher technological pursuits. While the distribution of the tribal workers in the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors give a broad indication of the nature of their participation in the different sectors of economy, it is necessary to have an idea of the specific occupations in the different sectors in which the tribal are generally engaged. They are: (i) Forestry and food-gathering; (ii) Shifting cultivation; (iii) Settled agriculture; (iv) Agricultural labour; (v) Animal husbandry (vi) Household industry; and (vii) Miscellaneous occupations.

There are few tribal communities who are engaged wholly in forestry and food-gathering. Probably the Andamanese, Onges and Shompens of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are the only communities who belong to this category. There are also communities like the Birhor, Malapandaram, etc., who are predominantly engaged in forestry and food-gathering; but it seems that they have symbiotic relationship with the peasant communities and live by exchange of commodities. Shifting cultivation as the means of livelihood is found among many of the tribal communities of NEFA Nagaland, Manipur,

TABLE 8

(a) General Population	Total population (in '000's)	Percentage of workers	Proportion of Workers under each industrial category								
			I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII	VIII	IX
(b) Scheduled castes			As Cultivators	As Agricultural labourers	In mining, quarrying, livestock, forestry, fishing, hunting & plantations, orchard and allied activities	At Household Industries	In manufacturing other than Household Industry	In Construction	In Trade & Commerce	In Transport Storage and Communications	In other Services
(c) Scheduled Tribes											
India (a) 438,937*	43	53	17	3	6	4	1	4	2	10	
(b) 64,449	47	38	34	3	7	3	1	1	1	12	
(c) 29,837**	57	68	20	3	2	1	N	N	N	5	

\* Excludes 297,853 persons of that part of NEFA where simplified census scheduled was canvassed instead of all-India Census Schedule.

\*\* Excludes population of 292,972 of NEFA as their distribution into literates, workers and its categories is not available.

Tripura, parts of Assam, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. Shifting cultivation as the subsidiary means of livelihood is more widespread. It is found among some of the tribal communities, in West Bengal, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Mysore and Kerela. In most cases the tribal communities engaged in shifting cultivation have other sources of livelihood as well. They try to supplement their income from shifting cultivation by the income from settled agriculture. For this purpose, they construct terraces. Besides many of them engage themselves as labourers in construction activities. They also work as agricultural labourers. Settled agriculture is the primary source of livelihood for the overwhelmingly majority of the tribal population in the country. This consists of terraced cultivation, wet-rice cultivation and upland cultivation. In some parts of the country, for instance, Kerala, Gujarat, Maharashtra, West Bengal considerable number of tribals earn their livelihood as agricultural labourers. Animal husbandry as the main source of livelihood exists only among a few tribal communities, like the Gujars of Himachal Pradesh, some section of Bhotiyas of Uttar Pradesh and Todas of the Nilgiri Hills. Industry, as the main source of livelihood, is found only among small tribes with scattered population such as the Mahalis of West Bengal, Turisof Bihar and Aganas of Madhya Pradesh. They are attached to their dominant neighbours as satellite communities and manufacture for their clients. Diversified modern occupation is not the predominant means of livelihood for any of the tribal communities. However, some of the tribal communities have been drawn to a greater extent into a few modern industries. For instance the Santals, Oraons, Mundas, etc., have provided bulk of the plantation tea-gardens of Assam and North Bengal. Some of these tribals have also been drawn to the mining industry. The Bhils and the Gonds have been drawn into the industrial labour force of Maharashtra and Gujarat, to some extent.

# The North-East Frontier Agency

D. ERING

The North-East Frontier Agency, known better by its short name, NEFA came into limelight during the Chinese incursions into our territory during October-November, 1962. It was hardly known earlier as a part of the country administered by the Union Government of India. Its very name, in fact, is not suggestive of a territory, where a welfare administration very much exists for nearly four hundred thousand people of India.

## TERRITORIAL JURISDICTION AND ADMINISTRATION

The administration of the area of what is now constituted; as the North-East Frontier Agency started as early as in 1882 as parts of Lakhimpur and Darang districts of Assam under the charge of the Deputy Commissioner of those districts. In 1914, the area was divided into three sections and named Eastern, Central and Western Sections. For administrative purposes, the new changes were known as the (i) Central and Eastern Section, North-East Frontier Tract, (ii) the Lakhimpur Tract and (iii) the Western Section, North-East Frontier Tract with headquarters respectively at Sadiya, Dibrugarh and Charduar. Subsequent to this, administrative changes were made in this territory in 1919, 1921, 1925, 1926, 1928, 1929, 1931, 1943 and 1948. In 1954, by the North-East Frontier Areas (Administration) Regulation, 1954, readjustment and redesignation of the administrative units were made. By this regulation, the North-East Frontier Tract, consisting of the five administrative units that had been formed by 1948, and the Naga Tribal Area, came to known as North-East Frontier Agency. The Frontier Tracts were renamed as Frontier Division. Thus in 1954, NEFA was composed of six Frontier Divisions, namely, Kameng, Subansiri, Siang, Lohit, Tirap and Tuensang. Then again in 1957 the last administrative change was made, when by the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area Act, 1957, the Tuensang Frontier Division was transferred from NEFA to the newly constituted administrative unit then called Naga Hills-Tuensang Area.

The administration of this territory, ever since its creation, vested in the Foreign and Political Department of the Government of India. Even after Independence this responsibility remained with the Ministry of External Affairs till August 1, 1965 on which date the administration of



NEFA was taken over by the Ministry of Home Affairs as recommended by the Ering Committee and the Frontier Divisions were redesignated as Districts. The designations of the administrative officers—Political Officer, Additional Political Officer, Assistant Political Officer (I), Assistant Political Officer (II) and Base Superintendent were respectively changed to Deputy Commissioner, Additional Deputy Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Extra Assistant Commissioner, Circle Officer.

The territorial jurisdiction of the area that is constituted as NEFA today has thus evolved through a gradual process of development and administration. NEFA is constitutionally a part of the State of Assam but its administration is carried on by the President of India through the Governor of Assam acting as his agent under the provisions of the sixth Schedule (Part B) of the constitution.

#### PHYSICAL FEATURES

NEFA is a mountainous, horse-shoe shaped territory bounded on the west by Bhutan, with which it has a common border of nearly 300 kms, on the north by Tibet, on the east by Burma separated by the Patkoi Hills, on the south by the Brahmaputra valley of Assam. With Tibet it has a common frontier, right from Bhutan border eastward to the tri-junction of India, Burma and China in the extreme north-east. This border is about 1,000 kms long and passes along some high peaks of the eastern Himalayan ranges. With the exception of Tirap, the eastern-most district along the Patkoi range, remarkable changes in the elevation are met with as one travels north from south. Over comparatively short distances the elevation keeps on rising from mere 150 metres (500 ft) to the great heights ranging between 4,242 metres (14,000 ft) to 5,454 metres (18,000 ft). In Tirap, of course, there is a comparatively large area of plains which gradually merges into the hills ranges and ends on the Burma border in comparatively low mountains. NEFA thus presents a wide variety of topography, climate, fauna and flora. The topography is deeply dissected by a few large north-south flowing rivers like the Bhorelli (Kameng), the Subansiri, the Siang (Dihang), the Dibang, the Lohit; and the Tirap only which flows in south-north direction. All these as also many other smaller rivers, flowing from north to south, drain into the mighty Brahmaputra. These rivers are separated from each other by steep, dividing ranges. The river Siang is the mainstream of Brahmaputra. It originates in Tibet from a place not far from Mansarovar, travelling eastward, where it is known as Tsangpo, enters Siang district of NEFA, from where it takes its name as Siang. Just outside the Southern boundary of the district, in Assam, the Siang is joined by the Dibang and the Lohit, wherefrom it takes the name Brahmaputra.

Owing to an undulating topography, the climatic conditions tend to change within short distances. There is a contrast in temperature and rainfall between sheltered valleys, foothills and mountain tops. The rainfall is highest in the

foothills belt, where it ranges between 2600 mm to 4900 mm annually, and lowest in the north-western and north-eastern tips where it is as low as about 760 mm. The pre-monsoon showers start in the foothills by the middle of February. The monsoon starts early in June and lasts till the end of September. June, July and August are the months of heaviest precipitation. Winter rains are a regular feature. The snow line in NEFA is not as low as the western Himalaya, precisely due to the little southern latitudes of NEFA. It snows on the mountain tops and passes but not much in the valleys at heights of 2,000 metres and above. At Towang, in north-western Kameng, the heaviest snowfall would be nearly one metre. Winters are cold and damp. The minimum temperature ranges between 0°C to 2°C in the south, to 7°C in the north. The summer temperatures in the south may go as high as 38°C.

#### AREA AND POPULATION

NEFA occupies an area of 81,436 sq. km (31,438 sq. miles). Census in NEFA was for the first time conducted in 1961 when its population was 3,36,558. The density of population works out to 4.13 per sq. km (10.7 per sq. mile), the lowest in India. With 2,451 villages what there are in NEFA, the average population per village comes to 137. The highest density of the population is met with in the Apa Tani valley of Subansiri district where in 1961 lived 10,950 Apa Tanis in an approximately 52 sq. km. plateau, the density being 210 per sq. km. Of the five districts in NEFA, Lohit is the most sparsely populated with a density of 1.5 per sq. km. only, while Tirap is thickly populated with density of 8.43 per sq. km. Even if it be assumed that population in NEFA is growing at the national average of 2.5 per cent per annum, the population would be a little more than 4.20 lakhs, with the density of 5.16 per sq. km. Still then it will be the lowest of all the union territories, not to speak of the states.

#### ETHNIC GROUPS, SPOKEN DIALECTS AND DIVERSITY

NEFA is a land of great diversity of people, culture and tradition. There are as many as 82 ethnic groups, each speaking their own dialect. Groups living in each other's close proximity understand each other's dialect but not otherwise. In some cases there is little difference between the dialects spoken by contiguous tribes, like the Padams and Minyongs of Siang, and they understand each other well. In most cases, however, the dialects are not understood by two ethnic groups living within the same district, and certainly not by those living in other districts. In the twenty-two years of freedom a lingua franca for NEFA has not yet developed. Nor is there an esperanto to provide inter-tribal or inter-district link. In this respect NEFA is marked by a heterogeneity. Probably in no other tribal area of India there is today such a great diversity of

dialects. The Khamptis or Lohit is the only tribe in NEFA who have their own script. The Brahmi-Monpas of Kameng have their scriptures in Tibetan. Both of these tribes are Buddhists. None of the tribes or sub tribes of NEFA have their own scripts. Yet with such diversity, there are certain essentially common and discernible characteristics and features amongst the people. These are—siting of villages on hill tops, their pile-dwellings shifting cultivations. Meat-eating with hardly any reservations aversion to milk and milk products, ample drinking of rice-beer, weaving on loin-loom and absence of money economy amongst many tribes or sub-tribes, aversion towards cow dung as manure. And then there are the qualities of NEFA people like their exceptional co-operative sense of living and working, self-reliance hospitality, courage in the face of very difficult conditions of living by any standard, gay and cheerful disposition.

#### ECONOMIC INTER-DEPENDENCE

NEFA can be divided laterally into three distinct belts. The northern belt along the international border, the middle belt and the southern belt along the border with Assam. Prior to the occupation of Tibet by China, the people had some economic dependence on Tibet for items like wool, milk products, the Tibetan brassware. Trade and barter with Tibet has stopped completely since 1962. The Administration of NEFA has opened Border Area Shops in the northern belt to provide them yarn, salt, tea leaves and a host of other articles. That way the northern tribes have some economic dependence on the plains of Assam, Kalimpong etc.

The tribes living in the middle belt, where road communication has not reached, are self-sufficient in the sense that they grow or produce everything that they need, except of course the salt which they are provided by the administration. That way, the tribes of the middle belt are economically independent.

It is the people of the southern belt comprising of the foot-hills and valleys connected by road who are economically dependent on Assam. The demand for consumer goods in this belt is steadily rising which they obtain from the plains of Assam. Some such goods are—torchlights, mill made cloth, hosiery, cosmetics, soap, combs, shoes, match box, kerosene-oil, hurricane lamps, cigarettes and tobacco, bicycles, transistor radios, wrist watches, aluminium utensils, buckets, fountain pens, hair oil, hats for men, ear-rings, glass beads, imitation jewellery and so on. Increasing demand of consumer goods is attributable to the economic well-being of the people of this belt. This, no doubt, works as an incentive to produce more.

There are only a few items of surplus agricultural produce that find a market in the plains of Assam, and that too only in the foothills or southern belt. These are mustard, maize, ginger, chillies, betel leaves and cereals. The

people of NEFA, however, do not buy food from Assam. Nor do they produce enough fruits to sell in Assam.

The people of NEFA are basically cultivators. There are yet no class of people known by the economic terms like traders, middlemen; ware-earners, landless labourers are known by the professional classifications as carpenters, goldsmiths, blacksmiths, masons, sweepers, money-landers, marchants and so on. Changes are slowly coming in and these are more discernible around the administrative headquarters connected by good roads where local people own shops and sell their merchandise or they take petty contracts with the local Engineering or Forest Departments. Still then they own lands and cultivate them.

#### AGRICULTURE : SHIFTING CULTIVATION

A great majority of people of NEFA, with very exceptions, practise shifting cultivation on the hill slopes, even on precipitous ones, and this is closely linked with their social custom and mythology. They cut the trees and plants on the slopes during the dry season and leave it to dry. The cutting is extremely thorough. Natural vegetation is completely razed to the ground and no trees are left standing beyond mere stumps. On the day fixed for the clearing, the whole village except the invalids goes out to the selected spot and do the work on family basis. Cutting of tree being a hard work is undertaken by men. On cutting the jungle the big logs of woods are used for demarcation of boundaries between individual fields. The rest ensures them a good supply of firewood. The debris is burnt when dry. After burning, the land is cleared of heavy charred logs and branches. Sometimes they are burnt again. Question of using plough in such cultivations does not arise at all. The seed is not even broadcast, but is dibbled in with the help of a long pointed stick.

A clearing is used for two years and is then abandoned to facilitate the natural recuperation of soil fertility. Another patch is then cultivated which again is abandoned after two years. In this way, patch after patch is cultivated and abandoned for recuperation, returning back to these patches after a period of years which varies according to the pressure of population and availability of land. It may be anything between 7 to 20 years. The real problem arises when an increase of population necessitates a shortening of the cultivation cycle and the use of land before sufficient recuperation.

This system of cultivation is called 'jhum' in Assam and Tripura and 'Slash and Burn Cultivation' by the anthropologists. This is not confined merely to NEFA. Tribes in Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland, Orissa similarly cultivate on the hill slopes. A great many tribes in Africa, besides people in Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia, practise the same have decried it as destructive, wasteful, extravagant, primitive, cause of erosion



and floods. And yet another school of thought, including certain experts, holds an entirely different view about it. A discussion on the controversy is, however, beyond the scope of this paper. Truly speaking, shifting cultivation is a way of life for people of NEFA. Here he belongs to his community. To him his community means everything. It is his main source of security. He relies upon his community to help him in emergency. His decisions are greatly influenced by the community he lives in. He depends on his community for social approach. Members of communities in NEFA cooperate to do things that are difficult or impossible for individuals working alone, for instance, clearing of new land for 'jhum', fencing round their cultivation, the perimeter of which may well be five to eight kilometres, maintenance of inter-village paths. Because of this mutual dependence, cultivators are usually reluctant to do anything that would upset their community structure or break down the traditions of mutual aid.

A variety of crops is grown in the course of shifting cultivation, such as highland paddy, maize, finger millets, fox-tail millets, job's tears, colocasia, ginger, chillies, tobacco sweet potato, tapioca and vegetables like mustard leaves, pumpkins and brinjals, and cotton.

These exercises provide almost everything that can be grown. There is nothing else for him to meet his requirement of food. He cannot buy his food. There are no such markets in the interior of hills. At the most he can borrow, but then there is a limit to it also. The aim of a shifting cultivator is therefore to produce everything in his cultivation that he needs, short of self-sufficient farming. In settled agriculture, the surplus produce is sold to procure other necessities like sugar, mustard, oil, pulses. In this case there are markets nearby or at least the buyers. Therefore, farmers, whose settled agriculture is advanced, can afford to grow a limited varieties of crops that would fetch him good price. Whereas, in case of shifting cultivations, this is just not possible. This, therefore, is the essential difference between settled agriculture and shifting cultivation, an important point to take note of.

#### SETTLED AGRICULTURE

There were three exceptions, in the pre-independence era, to the traditional farming method in NEFA. The Brahmi Monpas of Towang in Kameng district cultivate on the terraces, plough their land and even manure their fields by a mixture of oak leaves and night-soil. They grow wheat in the terraces. Then the Apa Tanis in the heart of Subansiri district. In perennially irrigated 52 sq. km. plateau, the Apa Tanis grow paddy with meticulous care. They do not plough their land, instead hoe with spades.

First account of the Apa Tanis and their advanced agriculture was given in 1891 by H.M. Crowe, a Tea Planter who spent his Christmas in 1890

on the Apa Tani plateau. The third are the Khamptis living in the plains adjoining Assam. They also grow rice, and plenty of it. They have their own typical plough, use buffaloes and even elephants for ploughing.

The NEFA Administration did probably the wisest thing that could be done under the circumstances. Without any controversy on 'shifting cultivation' or 'no shifting cultivation', the Administration very early started the introduction of 'permanent cultivation' of rice. The word 'permanent cultivation' is used in NEFA to denote (against the background of shifting cultivations of NEFA people) the cultivations of rice which are cultivated year after year as in any other part of India, and not abandoned. Since the Administration in the late forties operated from bases in Assam, the foothills belt of NEFA adjoining the border of Assam was the first to try this innovation.

The entire operation right from felling forests to the levelling of fields and cutting of irrigation channels, ploughing and the supply of seeds, tools and plough bullocks was subsidised by the Government. The idea slowly caught up with the people. As the administration extended north, the flat river valleys were touched. Today, twenty two years after Independence, nearly 10,000 hectares of land in NEFA has thus been brought under 'permanent cultivation' of rice. The people of NEFA are today, convinced of this method of cultivation and do not now ask for Governmental subsidies for bringing land under rice permanently. Tribes in the foothills belt of NEFA have nearly left the shifting method of cultivation of their own accord. Yet there are other tribes who are practising both the systems, the shifting and the 'permanent'.

#### THE CHANGE FOR BETTER

Permanent cultivation of rice has undoubtedly brought prosperity to the people who are doing it. Production in the first few years was absorbed internally by them. From 1959 onwards, some areas became surplus, and the surplus rice is being sold locally to government employees and to the floating population of labourers of CPWD, forests and contractors. In the foothills, their traditional economy has almost been replaced by monetised economy. As an essential corollary to it, their demand for consumer goods is steadily going up. A lot of other change is coming in, like change of dress, hairstyles, use of cosmetics and so on. This is bound to come; but it has come from within and not by using force. People in this belt have the maximum contacts with the plains of Assam. They have become conscious of markets and the rise and fall of prices of agricultural commodities. Naturally, a change is slowly coming in the patterns of cropping. Proximity and access to market has largely influenced this change. For instance, ginger and chillies were at one time important cash crops of the people of the foothills belt but now they have been replaced by mustard and

maize. Cultivation of wheat was demonstrated at Pasighat, the Sub-Divisional headquarters of Siang, for the first time. The people, right at the first sight, are very much attracted towards it. They are aware of its great market value. Wheat has therefore a great future in the entire foothills belt of NEFA.

#### DISCUSSION ON SHIFTING CULTIVATION

Reverting to the subject of shifting cultivation, one thing can be said very clearly about it, that there is no alternative to it in NEFA. In the first instance, it needs to be understood that shifting cultivations do not necessarily mean shifting villages. The villages remain on their sites and do not necessarily move with every new patch that is cleared and cultivated. Secondly, it will be very wrong to assume that the NEFA people who practise shifting cultivation are unaware of the important factor of soil erosion. They are very much alive to it and their experience of generations has helped them evolve small indigenous agricultural tools which are not merely handy and easily worked on the slopes, but they also disturb the soil the least. Instead of sowing the seed broadcast and later covering it with soil, necessitating soil working, they irakeahole in the soil with a pointed stick and dibble the seed therein. This way the soil is not at all disturbed. Then, they do not use a hand hoe commonly known in north-India by its name of Khwfi, which is used for weeding and loosening the soil in the gardens. Instead, they use an indigenous hand hoe of flat iron, curved outwardly, which, while removing the weeds by scratching, does not loosen soil. They never use spade or pick-axe or crow bar, all of which are erosion-encouraging tools on slopes. They would neither use a sickle to harvest their crops for very simple reasons not really understood by casual visitors. Firstly, the shifting cultivation is rather far from the villages and may be two to three miles away, involving marching on difficult terrain. The harvests have necessarily to be head-loaded to their villages. Secondly, they do not stall-feed their cows or 'mithun' (*Bos frontalis*). They have thus no use for paddy straw or any crop residues for that matter. Therefore, they do not have to harvest their paddy or other crops by a sickle close to the ground level as is done in settled agriculture. All that they need to harvest and carry back to their villages are the grains. So they harvest the paddy just below the ears or grain stalks. If they use a big thing like a sickle to harvest by the grain stalks, there is every chance of shedding of grains. They, therefore, use a pen-knife sort of a sharp tool to cut the grain stalks and throw them in the basket slung on their back. Even this they thresh in the cultivation fields and carry the grains only back to the villages over the difficult terrain. It is therefore clear that whatever the people of NEFA do, there are cogent reasons behind their ways of doing things. The climate, the terrain, their food habits, their requirement, their self reliance, their social customs, all have a say on the

system of cultivation that they practise. It has been evolved by the experience of generations and is well set in its original home.

A lot has been said and written in the past about improvement of shifting cultivations and weaning people from it. Experts have given their views individually and a number of committees have given their recommendations. Amongst the experts, the notables are Pierre de Schlippe of erstwhile Belgian Congo, M.D. Chaturvedi, one time Inspector General of Forests, Government of India, B.N. Uppal, one time Agricultural Commissioner, Government of India, M.S. Sivaraman, one-time Adviser, Programme Administration, Planning Commission and late Verrier Elwin, one-time Adviser, Tribal Affairs, NEFA, Manipur and Tripura. The Committees which went into this matter were the Inaccessible Area Committee headed by the Raja of Nalagarh, the Renuka Ray Committee, the Dhebar Commission, the FAO Enquiry Committee on Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks headed by Verrier Elwin and the National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER), India. All of them say that the shifting cultivation is a way of life, it needs a human approach, and they all have cautioned against 'upsetting the system by the precipitate introduction of concepts too strange to the traditional mode of thinking'.

Any improvement of shifting cultivation or of its replacement by another system must take into account the socio-economic conditions of the people engaged on it. The improvement or replacement suggested must make them happy and more prosperous than what they are. Attempts in Tripura were made to bring down the 'Jhumias', as the shifting cultivators are called there, from the hills and settle them in more flat regions in colonies. They were provided with sufficient subsidies to build houses, to buy bullocks, seeds, tools and other basic needs. This experiment has apparently failed and has made the settlers unhappy. In such shifting the subsistence economy of the people is placed in direct competition with larger and monetised economies. The result is that the economy of the settlers succumbs to the impact of the stronger economy. The Renuka Ray Committee has been very critical of this, and very rightly so. The Committee observed, "It should thus appear to be a costly and long-drawn-out process and the results do not promise to be commensurate with the effort or outlay". The Dhebar Commission visited some such colonies and remarked some of them as 'absurd'. Dr. Ganguly, Principal, J. N. College, Pasighat, NEFA, who has made detailed economic study of shifting cultivators of Tripura, has in his recent book suggested against colonisation of the tribal cultivators.

An expert has suggested growing in the third year, when the shifting cultivation is left fallow, perennial red gram (arhar) which may be dibbled by April a foot apart along the contours of slopes in rows four feet apart. And sowing seeds of *Calapagonium muconoides*, a fast growing creeper, when the red gram is 3 to 4 weeks old. *Calapagonium* forms a thick matted growth



within two months and prevents soil erosion completely and suppresses weeds and grasses. A variation of this method, he has suggested, will be to grow perennial red gram and long duration cowpeas in the kharif season and a pea or gram crop in the rabi season or perennial leguminous shrubs like *Tephrosia Candida* (*Bogamedoloo*) or *Crotalaria anagyroides*. All the legumes, he says, will grow upto 4,000 feet elevation.

Work on the lines suggested above was not undertaken in NEFA although the suggestions hold a promise. His suggestion of growing perennial leguminous shrubs in the abandoned shifting cultivations though simple is far-reaching. Natural recuperation of soil, particularly the nitrogen content, is bound to be more and rapid too. And this the NEFA people would be willing to take up provided of course they are convinced of it. Redgram, gram, pea, cowpea are not likely to succeed for two reasons. One, the people have no use for these since they do not take any pulse. Two, experience in NEFA has shown that pod borers do havoc to the pods of pulses. The people should not be expected to apply plant protection measures for saving the pods from insect pests. It will be costly beside time consuming.

The first two suggestions are not likely to gain acceptance for a very important reason. The people of NEFA clear patches every year for cultivation and not every third year as is generally believed. Each patch is cultivated for two years. There are set cropping patterns for the first and the second year of cultivation. The general practice is that in the first year of cropping, a mixed crop is taken consisting of maize, millets, chillies, ginger, country beans, tobacco and so on, while in the second year, on the same patch, a whole crop of highland paddy is taken. If they clear patches every third year, they have either to miss the mixed crops or the paddy for one year. This they cannot afford. Therefore, they clear patches every year and sow the mixture of crops in the year of clearance and paddy only in the following year, by which time another patch is clear for the mixed cropping. In this manner each family has to manage two cultivations, the new and the old, situated wide apart. Small population and the size of the family being very small, management of two cultivations simultaneously is very strenuous for them. Their time schedule is tight, much of it is lost walking up and down the two cultivations from their village. The suggestion to grow perennial red gram and long duration cow peas in Kharif and a crop of pea or gram or a mixture of both, in the third year of clearance, would amount to tending three patches simultaneously. This would be too much for the NEFA people and they would not be able to take it up howsoever sound the suggestion may be from soil recuperation point of view. It is often not realised that the hill tribal mind is not very much interested in long term planning.

Indeed, there are villages in NEFA where the cycle of shifting cultivation is shortening. With every increase in population, the problem of short

cycles is bound to arise in larger proportions, not only in NEFA but also in the hill areas of Assam, Nagaland, Manipur, Tripura and Orissa. The Indian Council of Agricultural Research, it is felt, should be able to sponsor a scheme for detailed study of the problem and suggest ways and means of tackling it. The scheme should be manned and managed entirely by the ICAR and it is certain that the wide experience and counsel of the officers of these States/Territories would be readily available to ICAR.

Indeed, the research in this line would be a long-term one, but the solutions offered should be simple and practical in the agro-climatic, topographical and the socio-economic conditions obtained in this north-eastern region of India. The Committee on the Special Multipurpose Tribal Blocks in its report (1960) has suggested introduction of cassava or manioc, known better in India by the name tapioca, in the shifting cultivations. Tapioca has proved successful in Congo. But then this is not a new thing for NEFA. The Noctes and the Wanchos of Tirap district grow a lot of tapioca in their shifting cultivation. The Padams, the Minyongs, the Gallongs and the Tagins, although do not grow Tapioca in their cultivations, have sufficient reserve of wild tubers in the forests around and fall back upon it in times of need. That way, almost all the shifting cultivators in NEFA have one or the other thing to come in handy.

#### TERRACING

The NCAER has in its Techno-Economic Survey Report on NEFA (1967) has proposed a target of 4,000 hectares (nearly 10,000 acres) of terracing in NEFA during the Fourth Plan period and has suggested use of tractor power for it wherever possible. This works out to 160 hectares (nearly 400 acres) per year per district. The NEFA Administration also has laid emphasis on terracing. The target set forth by NCAER for terracing is rather high and would almost amount to rushing through the programme of terracing. There is no need to rush large scale terracing in NEFA. The people of NEFA are not really short of food in the sense that they do not draw food from the government resources. They may be short in terms of cereals, pulses, lesser millets or, to put it straight, in terms of sophisticated meaning of 'food', but they are self-sufficient people, are quite happy and are not a drain on the lean governmental resources. So there is no cause for rushing the programme of terracing. Food is, of course, short for government employees in NEFA. In this case also there is no cause of alarm. Road communication in NEFA has improved very considerably after the Chinese aggression in 1962. This has opened up new potential areas for development. Of the eleven districts and sub-divisional headquarters in NEFA, nine can be reached directly by road and one by a rail-cum-road link. Much of this is due to the real work done by the Border Roads Organisation. Road communication

has, in fact, opened the way for intensification of agriculture in the foothills and valleys where people have permanent cultivations of rice. If this is done and the gains are thereby consolidated, the food problem of the government employees will be more than solved. Simultaneously, the programme of terracing can go on but at a slower pace. Initially, the terraces must invariably be irrigated. The concept of dry-terracing or dry-farming will not succeed in NEFA, for it will in so many ways be nothing better than their existing system of shifting cultivation.

#### IRRIGATION

Irrigation and more irrigation is of paramount importance. Potential resources of gravitational flow irrigation exist in NEFA, which need to be surveyed, planned and executed. NEFA people have their indigenous way of bringing irrigation by small channels, construct or repair their weirs year after year, and even use aqueducts where necessary. What they cannot do is align long channels passing through rocky portions or small stream beds or undulated topography. In the foothills belt, there is scope for tapping deep underground water, which also needs to be surveyed. This source will alone irrigate thousands of acres of land perennially, where paddy-wheat schedule of cropping can be very successfully undertaken. People in this belt are prosperous and would be able to buy diesel pumping sets. The Fourth Plan allocation of Rs. 16 lakhs for irrigation in NEFA is inadequate.

#### *Agricultural Planning: Defects*

There are certain basic defects in the agricultural planning. The Fourth Plan does not seem to take a note of the ground covered during the three successive plan periods and the three-year gap between the Third and the Fourth Plan, and the potential created. Sort of a unified pattern of development has been suggested for the entire NEFA. Priorities in agricultural planning have not been explicitly laid down. Agriculture has undoubtedly advanced in the foothills belt and in some valleys, particularly Siyom and Daporijo valleys, but the Fourth Plan does not however delineate such areas for the application of intensive dose of development. Agricultural economy of hill areas is not necessarily based on the cereals. Fruits contribute substantially to economic growth in the hills. Himachal Pradesh was far too correct to lay particular emphasis on the development of horticulture right from the Second Plan period. Apples, pear, peach, plum can successfully grow in Kameng district and more particularly in the Towang Sub-Division of the same district. The climate there is ideal for such fruits. Apples in Assam markets are got all the way from fruit packers in Delhi, and nowhere in Assam, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa conditions for growing apples are met with.

Towang apples that may have a great future. No real efforts have been made in NEFA so far towards the development of horticulture. Horticulture as a Wing of the Agriculture Department does not so far exist in NEFA. Extension workers of agriculture can hardly look after horticulture.

That there is an urgent need for an agricultural marketing organisation is not correctly realised. The foothills belt produces thousands of tonnes of mustard, all of which is marketed in the adjoining plains of Assam. So also maize. Problems of plenty would start showing up in this belt and certain valleys with every step forward towards high-yielding agriculture. New roads have opened up vast tracts and thereby created potential for increased production. Necessity of a marketing organisation cannot be over emphasised.

There is much to be done towards providing credits to farmers. Probably the rules that determine the credit-worthiness of farmers on an all-India pattern are sought to be applied in NEFA also. Pile-dwellings of the farmers are really not enough an insurance, nor the wet-rice land without a revenue holding number. A cause is thus lost in the maze of rules and conditions not applicable in NEFA.

### *Community Development*

There is much to be said about the Community Development Blocks in NEFA. These Blocks lay maximum emphasis on the agricultural development, and rightly so in NEFA where agriculture is the chief, rather the only, source of livelihood. The agricultural schemes undertaken in the Blocks are no different, materially, physically, from the ones undertaken by the Agriculture Department of NEFA. The involvement of people in the programme, whether sponsored by the blocks or the Department of Agriculture, is just the same. The staffing pattern in NEFA Blocks is very different from the all-India pattern in so far as the number of functionaries are concerned. In NEFA Blocks staff engaged is much lesser than other C.D. Blocks in India. On top of it, all the staff working in a Block are not borne on the Block establishment. Only five Gramsevak (Village Level Worker) are on Block staff whereas the Extension Officer (Agriculture), known in NEFA by the designation of Agriculture Inspector, is borne on the strength of the Department of Agriculture. Extension Officer (Animal Husbandry) and Extension Officer (Engineering) are borne on Block Staff. All the Blocks in NEFA have not been able to get the last named two officials. Other Gramsevak working in the Block are again borne on the Agricultural Departmental Strength. The Administrative Officer mostly the juniormost in the rung of the administrative ladder, of the Circle in which the Block is located, is the ex-officio Block Development Officer. He is first an administrative officer and only then a Block Development Officer. As can be expected, Block



Development work is only his secondary duty, and he finds less time for it. This therefore gives an impression that C.D. Blocks in NEFA are functioning just because they have to function, probably from the feeling that all India patterns of development must be followed in NEFA too. The NCAR has also been sceptical about the all India yardsticks in NEFA. The staffing pattern of the Blocks gives a feeling that the actual load on Block budget has been purposely kept low (by drawing most of the hands from the respective departments to function in the Blocks) to balance it with the figures of expenditure incurred on actual development work. It is strange that the work done by the staff borne on the strength of different departments is booked as 'Block work' while the expenditure on the staff is booked on the budgets of different departments. Apparently, block budgeting and its correlation with the work undertaken in the Blocks must be nothing short of mathematical jugglery.

The people of NEFA cannot differentiate between programmes undertaken by the C.D. Blocks and the Agriculture Department. To them every thing is the same. The problem arises when the Block is 'normalised' and some staff, as a result, is withdrawn. For instance, Extension Officer (Engineer) and Extension Officer (Animal Husbandry & Veterinary). The Administrative Officer ceases to function as decision making authority as ex-officio Block Development Officer. The people in their heart of hearts resent this and develop a feeling of having been let down by Administration. Normalisation of C.D. Block as a matter of course is beyond their comprehension. The tempo of development obviously goes down. C.D. Blocks functioning parallel to normal development departments is not an advisable proposition. It only creates disillusionment in the minds of NEFA people.

A more realistic approach would be to demarcate the entire NEFA into two distinct areas — the Intensive Agricultural Areas and Developing Areas — and to give them the treatments they deserve. The staffing pattern in the said two Areas would naturally be different. All the tracts served by all-weather roads can be classified as Intensive Agricultural Areas where intensive plans of agricultural, horticultural and commercial crops (like black pepper, arecan) development could be profitably implemented. These would be more or less permanent structures of planning and development. The present system of continuing C.D. (Agricultural) programmes in NEFA parallel to Agriculture Department is unnecessary duplication of work and agency.

#### COTTAGE AND VILLAGE INDUSTRIES

Development of rural industries in NEFA has apparently reached a point of stagnation. Things have not moved beyond cottage and village industries like weaving, carpentry, cane and bamboo crafts and blacksmithy. Of late, development potential of Hydro Electricity in NEFA is being examined. Of

the eleven schemes investigated, five have been sanctioned for construction, and two more will be sanctioned before long. This is time therefore to think in terms of demand-based small scale mechanised industries in NEFA, particularly around administrative headquarters. Small mechanised units for the production of various goods are available in the country. Maharashtra has made considerable progress in this line. Some such small units for the production of the following in NEFA need examination.

- (a) Bandage and Gauge for hospitals
- (b) Match box
- (c) Wood pencil
- (d) Tyre-retreading
- (e) Seasonal canning of fruits
- (f) Soap and Phenyle
- (g) Small printing press
- (h) Handmade paper
- (i) Gum from maize
- (j) Ink
- (k) Powdered spices and turmeric
- (l) Poultry feed.

It would be a good plan to take a group of interested persons from NEFA to the centres of production of small scale industries in the country and thereby motivate them to take up possible units in NEFA. The Administration will be required to provide technical training of the interested persons in the selected trades and on their return provide them credit to set up their units. Cost of production would definitely be cheaper. Such a plan would be more realistic and practical in NEFA than starting Polytechnic Institutes. Looking from the angle of employment potential in NEFA, the Polytechnic Institute will not succeed in the long run, and is likely to create more frustration for the trained-unemployed youths. Polytechnic-trained NEFA youngmen's getting jobs in other States of India would be a far-fetched idea. Assam, that way, has not been able to provide jobs to the youngmen trained in her own Institutes.

### *Animal Husbandry and Veterinary*

Except, of course, the Kameng district and villages close to the international frontier in the north, people of NEFA are not really animal husbandry men. The men who really rear cows, bulls, yak, ponies, mules are mostly Buddhists and there is definitely an impact of Tibet on their animal husbandry practices. Indeed, it will take years to turn the attention of the majority of the people of NEFA towards rearing livestock with an economic end. The situation therefore calls for real demonstration to the people by Government Livestock Farms. These farms should play the role of multiplication and research centres. The

object of research should be to find out the suitability in NEFA of the different breeds of livestock. NEFA has both temperate and tropical climate and, hence, the findings should aim at selecting breeds for two zones. A great many experts on cattle, sheep, goats, poultry and pigs have visited NEFA and each one of them had something to recommend on their experience of the rest of India. Development of breeds of livestock suitable for a region takes a long time no doubt, but then no attempt in this line seems to have been made so far in NEFA. The need for such trials in NEFA is probably not recognised. Some have said about the Murrah buffalo breed, which has not succeeded in Assam so far in the last 25 years. Yorkshor breed of exotic pigs, white, were brought to NEFA for up-grading of local pigs and distributed in the villages. So also RIR breed of poultry. The approach to the work of upgrading has been most unscientific. It has had no impact on the people.

Proper veterinary cover to the livestock and poultry of people is important and helps winning their confidence. They are conscious of the ravages of epizootics and put up various signs on the roads and paths restricting entry of men, and animals in the unaffected areas when there is a potent danger around. 'Mithun' (*Bos frontalis*), which is not really a 'Gaur' although a close relative of it, the much prized animal of the people of NEFA, die in hundreds of Rinderpest. This dreadful disease travels to different parts of NEFA from the plains of Assam, through diseased cattle which are taken into NEFA by the people from the Assam plains. Once Rinderpest spreads, it is almost impossible to control it in the difficult terrain of NEFA. The administration is aware of it but has not been able to put up cattle check-posts at the points of entry as a part of Rinderpest Eradication work in NEFA. The veterinary dispensaries in NEFA are not well stocked. There are even instances of Veterinary Assistant Surgeons in NEFA without the veterinary medicines.

Much of the problems of Animal Husbandry and veterinary development work in NEFA can be traced to the faulty organisation of this wing of the Agricultural Department of NEFA. Only two out of five districts in NEFA have the District Veterinary Officers to head the district team and in others the Veterinary Surgeons work under the control of District Agricultural Officers. There are no officers of adequate seniority at the Directorate level to direct the work.

#### FISHERIES

Development of fisheries in NEFA has good possibilities for two reasons. One, the flat valleys and foothills have good scope for pond culture; and two, the people are fond of fish. Fishing in NEFA by the people is more than the mere search for food. People have responded well to this branch of development. In Siang district, culture of fish in garden ponds has got on well. There should be in each district one fish-seed multiplication farm which should

meet the local requirement of fish free to interested farmers. Recently the administration has introduced trouts in Noranang Lake at high altitude in Kameng which were flown from Kashmir. This is commendable. Fourth Plan allocation of Rs. 12 lakhs for fishery development in NEFA appears to be little on the low side.

#### COMMUNICATION

Road building in NEFA has made commendable progress in the last six years. All the five district headquarters are connected by black-top roads, so also three sub-divisional headquarters. One is connected presently by a rail-cum-road link with Assam on the north bank of Brahmaputra. A number of lateral roads have been completed and more are under construction. A lion's share of this contribution to NEFA is of the Border Roads Organisation. The CPWD too with their small resources has contributed to the development of roads. They have very rightly given priority to road building over building construction in their plan of work in NEFA. Communication with the rest of the country will go a long way in the development of this strategic border area, where the pace of development in the present situation has to be fast enough.

#### EDUCATION

NEFA has seen tremendous expansion of educational facilities since 1947. Starting with only two Primary Schools in 1947, there were 455 educational institutions in 1967. This included one Degree College, 7 Higher Secondary Schools, 9 High Schools, 28 Middle Schools and 410 Primary Schools. 19,519 students were studying in these Institutions. First batch of 16 NEFA students from the Degree College appeared in B.A. Part II Examination in 1968 from Gauhati University, of which 10 passed. 21 students have appeared in B.A. in 1969. Number of students per teacher was 21 in Primary Schools, 12 in Middle Schools, 16 in High Schools, 10 in Higher Secondary Schools and 4 in the College. 121 NEFA students were studying in Schools, Colleges and Universities outside NEFA in 1966. Only 15 of them were studying Science ranging between pre-university stage to post-graduate stage. Of these only one passed B.Sc., eleven failed and three discontinued their studies. Two NEFA students had joined an Engineering College in Assam in 1968. It is not known if they are continuing their studies. Two are studying medicine. One was studying Law in 1965 and another in 1966 and both of them passed. By far the largest number of students beyond pre-university stage are in Arts. One NEFA student after passing Law has entered IAS cadre through competitive examination and four are in Indian Frontier Administrative Service cadre, including one who is an agricultural graduate. Thereafter none have graduated in Agriculture or Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Science



although NEFA provides stipends every year for studies in these branches.

The National Council of Applied Economic Research (NCAER) in its Report (1967) has dealt with Education in NEFA in great details and has been very critical of it. Commenting on the NEFA-type basic education in primary and middle school levels, the Council feels that basic education in Schools as it is being imparted at present does not meet with the needs of situation. In giving an illustration of its feeling, the Council has observed:

Let us take the typical training given in agriculture which is the most important occupation in the region. The children are taught the rudiments of botany in the classroom, but the way it is taught is such that it is impossible for the children to link up the knowledge gained with what their parents do when they are farming. Classroom teaching is supplemented by practical work. This is usually done on a small plot of land. The plot is further sub-divided into smaller sub-plots for each class. Actually, these plots are so small that the crops that can be grown on it are mainly vegetables. In addition there may be a few plants of millets or pineapples. Even by a considerable stretch of imagination, it is difficult to establish any kind of relationship between this kind of agriculture and the one that is practised in the villages. It is not surprising therefore that the children fail to acquire any knowledge which has a link with the farming they have known. Even after a few years of this type of education they do not feel that they have learned anything which can be applied to the family farm for raising the output. Such basic training, in fact, serves little purpose.

The entire approach of the NCAER to the problems of education in NEFA starts on the premise that the policy or programme for education must be related to the economic development of NEFA. Present framework of the secondary and higher education in NEFA, the Council says, is based on wrong assumption. Purely general education will lead NEFA not far, for the employment potential for the educated youngmen is getting lower and lower every year. The Council cautions NEFA against the dangers of liberal education and has suggested diversification right from middle school level. In the primary stage, while efforts will be directed towards teaching the three R's, accent will be on elementary agriculture and training in handling the tools for some of the generally useful crafts, such as carpentry and smithy. At the middle level, the main emphasis will be on agriculture but students who show promise in any non-agricultural craft could be given more advanced courses and prepared for further training in technical schools. At the higher Secondary stage, the weeding out process having been completed, full emphasis will be on the general academic education. Side by side with such a pattern, there should be well run demonstration farms at central place where those students who are weeded out at the secondary

school stage can go through a regular course for a year or two. This would mean a complete orientation of the system of education. The whole education system may be so oriented that by the middle school stage it should be possible to separately identify the main stream of students. One stream 'would consist of those students who receive further general education in high schools (of which the best may go into university education), while another stream would go in for further training in farming techniques and another for craft training. These streams would thin out considerably after the high school stage, only the more promising going on for graduate studies.'

There is a good deal of truth in what the NCAER has said about the problem of education in NEFA. The policy or programme of education needs to be amended and tailored to the needs. Similar changes were brought about in Japan roundabout 1955 by which time Japan had rebuilt her war-torn economy considerably and a shift in the population from agriculture to industry had started. There is but one difference between what NCAER has suggested for NEFA and what has been done in Japan. The NCAER has recommended full emphasis on general academic education at the higher secondary stage and main emphasis on agriculture at middle school level. In other words, nothing has been suggested for those students who would wish to continue with agriculture even at higher secondary level at school. The proposal of NCAER means that only the deficient ones will go in for agricultural training, i.e. the ones who are weeded out at middle school level. In Japan the bifurcation takes place at higher secondary stage. In first category arts and science are taught, while in the latter are taught agriculture and allied subjects. Students desirous of continuing their agricultural education beyond higher secondary stage can join any agricultural university. By 1960 in Japan 830 Agricultural High Schools were established from which 59,000 students annually passed out and nearly 6,000 agricultural graduates came out of the 30 universities. Changes in NEFA agriculture are bound to come when people would go in for diversified farming from the present one-crop pattern. Steps right from now for a change over to vocational education have become necessary, in which agriculture will be the main. NEFA has its economy based on agriculture and it will remain so for generations.

### *Administrative Problems*

The administrative set-up in NEFA is unique in the sense that similar pattern of administration does not exist in any part of the country. The one in NEFA is called Single-Line Administration. At the district level all the power is concentrated in the chief executive, that is the Deputy Commissioner. In the same way, all the power is held by the junior administrative officers at the Sub-Divisional or Circle level. The Deputy Commissioner is responsible to

the administration for all the development work in his jurisdiction. As such, all the district development officers of different departments, like Agriculture, Education, Medical, Industries, Statistics, Animal Husbandry, have been placed directly under the control of the Deputy Commissioner. And all their staff, accounts and vehicles are borne on the pooled establishment of the Deputy Commissioner. He alone functions as the Establishment and Drawing and Disbursing Officer. No other officer has the power of drawing and disbursing. The only two exceptions to this are the Executive Engineers borne on the CPWD strength and the Divisional Forest Officers now borne on the Indian Forest Service cadre. At the district headquarters, the Deputy Commissioner is assisted by one or two Extra Assistant Commissioners, three Circle Officers and one Accounts Officer. At the circle level, the Circle Officer functions as head of all the officers and staff of different development departments placed in the Circle. The line of power thus goes down vertically from the Deputy Commissioner to the Circle Officer. At each level the executive officer is in complete control of the administration.

The technical officers of various development departments in the districts function more or less in an 'advisory' capacity and not really as district officers, and virtually are not responsible or not even answerable to their respective heads of departments at Shillong, for the key is held by the Deputy Commissioner. On paper at least there is that the Deputy Commissioners are answerable for the failure of development programme in the districts. In actual effect, the technical heads of departments at the headquarters can never do this. There is no link between the technical officers in the districts with their heads of the departments except through the Deputy Commissioner. The Annual Confidential Reports on the technical officers in the districts are initiated by the Deputy Commissioners and not by the Heads of the Departments. Similarly, the junior staff of the technical departments at the Circle level are administratively under the Circle Officer. For instance, a Gramsevak (VLW) in a Circle is responsible and answerable to the Circle Officer and not to be District Agricultural Officer. The district technical officers have no control whatsoever over their own junior staff in the Circles or even on other ministerial staff or peons in the district headquarters.

This sort of an administrative setup in NEFA was started in 1955 and is continuing till date. This has not yielded any good result but has brought degeneration in the rank and file of the technical departments. It has bred disloyalties at every level of the government employees.

The single-line administrative set-up in NEFA has made the Deputy Commissioners and their junior administrative officers all-knowing, all-seeing and all-pervading. They sit on judgement over not only of technical officers and staff but almost on anything. Drawing and Disbursing powers of the technical officers in the districts were withdrawn in 1957 and a centralised accounts pool was formed under the control of the Deputy Commissioner by

drawing the ministerial staff of the technical departments in the districts. This was done on the grounds of economy and efficiency. In actual effect, this has not effected any economy of expenditure and has brought in inefficiency in accounts-keeping and budgeting. Large sums of undisbursed money remain in the cash branch. Staff in the interior do not get their pay, TA and other bills in time. The Service Books are not maintained properly, which is very important document. Pension cases would invariably be thus delayed. Centralised accounts and establishment pools have become nobody's business.



# Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of the Hill Tribes of North-east India

B. K. ROY BURMAN

An integrated area approach will require careful analysis of the social situation in NEFA in its four dimensions. These are:

- (a) Geo-political Perspective;
- (b) Socio-cultural Perspective;
- (c) Political and Administrative Perspective; and
- (d) Economic Perspective.

## *A. Geo-political Perspective*

Tribal communities in North-East India are living on the fringe of three great political communities—India, China and Burma. Historically, some of them played roles of buffer communities, and others the roles of 'bridge communities' in between these three great political communities. When smaller communities play the roles of bridge or buffer, it is in the interest of the larger contact societies to maintain the separate identity of the first.

In the context of the recent changes in the political organisations of the countries concerned as well as in the modes of transport and communication the bridge and buffer roles of the small communities have become dysfunctional. Therefore, a re-adjustment of relations is inevitable. If it causes strain and tension, the same are inherent in the structure.

From a structural analysis, it is immaterial whether certain agencies like foreign missionaries or the emergent middle class have been involved in the postures of defiance on the part of the small communities concerned. Even if these agencies were not there, more or less similar developments would have taken place. It is significant to note that in Burma, one of the most important ethnic groups defying the authority of the Central government is the Shans, who are Buddhists of the same denomination as the other Burmese. As regard the role of the educated middle class, it is to be noted that even some of the Naga tribes among whom educated middle class is completely absent, have been involved in the hostile activities.

Here, it is to be noted that at present in Nagaland, the revenue receipt

is about 80 lakhs; on the other hand, the annual expenditure is to the tune of approximately Rs. 20 crores. Had this massive not been injected from outside, either the standard of living in Nagaland would have remained extremely low or the emerging educated middle class would have to raise the resources by pressurizing their own people for development, so that they could get job opportunities. It follows that at this stage, in their own interest, they should be co-operating with the rest of the country. If in spite of that, a considerable number of educated middle class from among the Nagas entertain separatist ideas, it is not because of their class character, but because of other socio-cultural factors.

An important fact, in terms of geo-political perspective is the type of political organization in the countries surrounding hills of north-east India. They are China, Burma, Pakistan and of course India itself. China is a totalitarian state, Burma is an effete democracy, Pakistan is an obscurantist country; on the other hand, in spite of severe limitations India is a secular democracy. It can be assumed that the more discerning section among the hostile elements of the region are conscious of the significance of the above facts.

### *B. Socio-cultural Perspective*

For an appraisal of the socio-cultural perspective the following facts are important:

1. *Race.* There is a predominance of Mongoloid racial type among the tribal communities of the hills of North-East India as well as of the adjoining countries (Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet, China, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia).

2. *Origin.* Many of the tribal communities in NEFA, Manipur and Mizo Hills have tradition of migration to their present habitats during the last two centuries only. Again most of them have traditions of originating either in Tibet or in South China from where they entered India via Burma.

3. *Language.* The languages mainly spoken among the hill tribals of North-East India are (a) Austric, (b) Tai and Kachin, (c) Tibeto-Himalayan and North Assamese, (d) Bodo, (e) Naga and (f) Kuki-China. Among these languages, Bodo language is found in the plains of Assam and Tripura also. Except for a small area in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Bihar districts of West Bengal, speakers of Bodo language are not found anywhere else in India. Outside Khasi and Jaintia Hills, speakers of Austric language are found only in Chhota Nagpur and Nicobar islands in India. On the other hand, speakers of all the above languages except Bodo are found in one or more the following countries: South China, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, North Vietnam and South Vietnam.

4. *Material Culture.* Hutton, the eminent anthropologist noted in the 1920s,

that there is a great deal of similarity in the material of the tribal communities beginning from the coast of the Pacific Ocean to the hills of Assam.

5. *Political Organization.* The political organization among the tribal communities of the region may be broadly put under two categories—(a) authoritarian type, (b) republican type. For instance, the authoritarian type of leadership prevails among the Garos and Lushais of Assam, Singphos and Khamptis of Lohit district, Noctes and Wanchos of Tirap district of NFFA, Konyaks, Changs, Eastern Semas of Nagaland, Kuki Chin group of tribe of Manipur and Reangs, Chakmas, etc. of Tripura. The republican type of political organization prevails among the Monpas, Akas, Sherdukpens, Tangsas and Adi group of tribes of NEFA, Angamis of Nagaland and the various Naga groups of tribes of Manipur. From an ecological perspective, it appears that the two types of political organization are distributed in alternate cycles. There are, however, a few communities whose political organizations fall in various positions in this model. For instance, the Khasis had organized states with chiefs whose position was more or less similar to that of a constitutional monarch. The political organization of the Ao Nagas also falls somewhere in between authoritarian and republican type of political organization.

It is significant to note that political ferment is more noticeable among those tribes, which have republican type of political organization. Perhaps it is because of the fact that this type of political organization provides broader base for the mobilization of the population concerned, for new type of political action.

In recent years, in some of the areas where the authoritarian type of political organization prevails, the chiefs were subjected to great pressure, and even challenge from the emerging educated elites. For instance, in 1953, by an Act passed on the recommendation of the District Council of Mizo Hills, chiefship was abolished. In Manipur, the educated Kukis were also challenging the authority of the chief; but it seems that they did not wield effective political organization to isolate the chiefs, who continued to wield considerable influence. In 1967, when the rights of the chiefs were abolished by an Act passed by the Manipur Assembly, the chiefs could rally the entire community in their support. Even the educated elites, who were opposing the chiefs in the past, staunchly stood by them, against what they thought to be an imposition from outside. In March, 1967 the special correspondent of *The Statesman*, Calcutta, observed that the Act passed by the Manipur Assembly could be one of the reasons for the revolt of the Kukis in February that year.

6. *Pattern of Internal Integration.* Many of the tribal communities in the region have segments which have traditions of diverse origin. They are integrated into a single community through various devices. For instance, among the Aimols of Manipur, there are two exogamous moieties with

different traditions of origin. They remain united through marriage alliances and adoption of various ritual roles. In many of the Ao Naga villages, there are two divisions, namely, Chungli and Mongsen, with slight differences in dialect and type of political organization. If a village had been established by the Mongsen people, the Mongsen language and political system would prevail, even if subsequently the Chunglis constitute the majority population in that village. Same would be the position in a Chungli village. But offices in the village organization will be held by the Mongsens and Chunglis in the proportion of their numerical strength. Thus, integration is attained through the continuity of tradition and ideology of the original settlers, but at the same time making adjustments in the share of political power.

7. *Age-group Organization.* Another factor contributing to the integration of clans and *phratries* of diverse origin was the institution of the bachelor's dormitory and the age-group organization. Cohorts belonging to different age-groups were organized for diverse economic, social and political roles in the village community. The younger age-groups constituted the cadre for rendering various services to the community during war and peace. The bachelor's dormitory in the village was their rallying centre. It seems that the age-group organization provided the operational base for the hostile activities in many Naga areas.

8. *Institution of automatic change of leadership.* In some Naga areas, there is a system of counting generations, in terms of a thirty years' cycle. After every thirty years, a new generation starts with a new name. The persons who were holding office at the time of the termination of one generation, would automatically be relieved of their posts and would not be able to hold the same offices during the next thirty years. Even if a young man came to occupy a office two years before the closure of one generation, he would be relieved of his post at that time.

Each generation has a name, for instance, six years ago, in an Ao Naga village, a generation which was named as "courageous generation" came to its end. The generation which followed, is named "the generation of wild rumour". It seems that the hostiles have made use of this tradition to their advantage.

Among the hostile Nagas, there is an arrangement of automatic change of leadership every three years. It seems that the old tradition has provided a precedence for this arrangement. One of the charges of the Kughato group against the Pro-Phizo group among the hostiles, is that they had violated the arrangement by General Mow's failure to hand over the charge of the army to his successor at the end of three years.

9. *Modern type of Association among the Ao Angami, Sema and other more advanced Naga tribes.* Among the above tribes, there are clubs and associations of the educated youths for quite some time. They are trying to modernize their society. Sometimes their intervention in the local affairs is



resented by the villages. But they are allowed free hand in the affairs at the regional or state level. The Adi group of tribes in NEFA, most of the Naga and the Kuki groups of tribes in Manipur, the Lushai and other groups of tribes in Mizo Hills have their respective youth organizations. Some of them are publishing separate journals of their own.

10. *Student Unrest.* Among the Adi group of tribes, and Tangsas of NEFA, the Ao Nagas of Mokokchung and the Khasis of K & J Hills, student unrest has been reported from time to time. These relate to three types: (a) matters connected with their educational facilities, (b) language policy of the government and (c) economic and political aspirations of their respective communities.

11. *Educational Imbalance.* In the Mizo Hills, though the level of literacy is high, a very low proportion of literates have effective education. In Nagaland also the position is more or less the same. Spread of technical education is also proportionally low in Mizo Hills and Nagaland. A corrective is to be introduced by balancing the aspiration-motivation pattern of the people and comprehensive manpower planning.

12. *Medium of Instruction.* In the autonomous hill districts of Assam, their respective mother-tongues constitute the media of instruction for primary education. Gauhati University has recognized Khasi as a language subject upto the post-graduate standard. In Nagaland also, the respective tribal languages are their media of instruction at the primary stage. Ao and Angami languages are taught in the secondary stage also. In Manipur a number of textbooks have been published in different languages with subsidy given by the Union Territory Administration. But in not a single school, these languages have been adopted as media of instruction or even as language subjects. Until 1965, the policy followed by the NEFA Administration was to prepare special text-books for the primary schools in the tribal dialects of the area. A large number of books were prepared and printed in the Devnagari script. After the primary school stage where medium of instruction was Assamese, Hindi was introduced. In some schools, Hindi was the medium of instruction from that stage onwards. English was introduced in Class V.

After 1965, the policy has been substantially modified, on the recommendation of a committee headed by D. Erring, Deputy Minister of the Union Government who hails from NEFA. The representatives of the local people wanted that either Hindi or English should be introduced as the medium of instruction at the earliest stage. In most of the areas the NEFA Administration has discontinued the teaching of the text-books prepared in the various tribal languages.

It is not clear whether the Erring Committee had the benefit of consultation with educationists who had experience of scientific research in such matters. In a report on the medium of instruction published by UNESCO,

it has been recommended that even in those cases where leaders of the local people do not want their language to be the medium of instruction, in the beginners class, an attempt should be made to persuade them to change their mind. It is based on sound pedagogical principles. Sometimes it happens that in the first stage of acculturation, the people concerned develop an inferiority complex about their own culture. They try to discard what they have and immitate cultures of the advanced communities. But at a second stage, there is a re-assertion of self-respect which leads to selective revival of the past. But in the process they are haunted by a feeling of being cheated by the donor group. The language policy in NEFA should be reexamined keeping this also in view.

13. *Absence of creative literature in some areas.* A large number of text-books and gospel literature have been published in the Ao, Angami and other Naga languages, but there is hardly any creative literature among them. On the other hand, in some of the Kuki languages of Manipur, there are not only text-books but also religious literature, fiction, drama and other books. Among the Paites, publication of such literature is financed out of the profit earned through running a bus service. It is to be examined whether obsession with politics of coercion without creating the intellectual base for the same, is responsible for absence of creative literature among the Nagas.

14. *Religion.* A statement giving the distribution by religion of the more important tribal communities of the region according to 1961 Census is furnished below :

Tribe	(Percentage)				
	Hindu	Christian	Buddhist	Tribal Religion	Others
<i>Assam</i>					
Garos	4.05	37.94	—	57.36	0.65
Kachari	98.63	6.16	0.21	—	—
Khasi	3.53	47.54	—	48.79	0.14
Mikir	75.11	10.28	—	14.24	0.37
<i>Manipur</i>					
Angami	0.16	55.22	—	—	44.62
Gangte	0.04	87.83	—	—	12.13
Hmar	0.12	99.21	—	—	0.67
Kabui	0.28	35.53	—	—	64.19
Kacha Naga	0.01	45.16	—	—	54.83
Mizo	0.11	99.78	—	—	0.11
Mao	—	22.02	—	—	77.98
Paite	0.23	85.69	—	—	14.08
Tangkhul	0.01	88.09	—	—	14.90

Tribes	Hindu	Christian	Buddhist	Tribal Religion	Others
Thadou	0.47	58.72	—	—	40.81
Nagaland					
Dimasa	99.79	0.21	—	—	—
Garos	40.67	59.33	—	—	—
Kuki	3.55	54.65	—	14.43	27.37
Mikir	98.71	1.29	—	—	—
Naga	3.62	55.12	—	27.51	12.75
NEFA					
Aka	—	—	—	50.00	50.00
Apatani	—	—	—	87.18	12.82
Ashing	—	—	—	28.26	71.74
Dafla	1.18	1.77	—	91.72	5.33
Galong	1.48	4.55	—	33.11	60.86
Khampti	—	—	93.88	—	6.12
Miju	14.02	0.93	—	79.44	5.61
Minyong	7.49	5.70	—	33.71	53.10
Miri	37.94	2.37	—	39.53	20.16
Mishami	86.67	0.48	—	3.33	9.52
Monpa	0.34	—	99.66	—	—
Nocte	46.97	1.51	4.55	36.36	10.61
Padam	10.00	23.61	—	19.18	47.21
Sherdukpen	10.00	—	90.00	—	—
Singpho	15.38	—	69.23	15.38	—
Tagin	42.98	0.88	49.12	7.02	—
Tangsa	2.42	1.21	3.03	49.70	43.64
Wancho	—	—	—	100.00	—

Note: While calculating the percentage distribution of religion, tribal population of NEFA for whom All India census schedules were not canvassed have been excluded from the table.

It is to be noted that in the above statement "others" include "indefinite belief" and "religion not stated". It seems that the tribal religion and "others" can, in most cases, be included in the same category.

15. *Significance of Christianity in the Hills of North-East India.* In the autonomous districts of Assam and Nagaland, Christianity was introduced early. Even then the most spectacular increase in the followers of Christianity has taken place from 1940s onward. In the post-independence period, the spread of Christianity has been stimulated considerably.

In Manipur and Tripura Christianity was introduced at a comparatively late period. In these areas also the more rapid spread of Christianity has taken place after independence. In NEFA conversion to Christianity has taken place

during the last few years.

It is frequently alleged that people have been converted to Christianity on a mass scale by allurements provided by the foreign missionaries, to some parts of the hills of North-East India, this may be true. But it is certainly not the whole truth. In many areas, Christianity appears to have served the role of filling up the intellectual and spiritual vacuum caused by the growing scepticism among the tribal population, about their traditional faith and world-view. It has also tended to serve as the vehicle for unification of the isolated small communities into a larger entity.

Among the Kuki tribes of Manipur, it has been found that there is a proliferation of local churches. In many cases, the different tribal communities broke away from the denomination originally adopted by them, because, the church organizations of those denominations failed to satisfy their ethnic aspirations. This seems to indicate that the tribal communities are not always the tools of the foreign missionaries as they are made out to be.

### *Significance of Hinduism*

The tribal communities in the hills of North East India seem to have some amount of inhibition in the matter of adoption of Hinduism. One of the factors responsible for this is that Hinduism in their eyes is identified with the domination of the people of the plains. In the past their relations with the people of the plains were not always happy and hence their inhibition in this matter is understandable.

### *A New Trend*

In recent years a trend towards revival of respect for and re-interpretation of old cultures and traditions of the tribal communities concerned is perceptible. In a seminar recently held at Shillong on the Sociology of the Hills, a highly educated Khasi presented an interpretation of their traditional religion at a high level of abstraction, incorporating the elements of the universal religions. It is significant that the Christian Khasis present in the seminar including the president of the Council of Presbyterian Church, Assam, fully agreed with this interpretation. One could feel the resurrection of a new pride in their past. In a recent publication on Khasi History and Culture by Dr. Hamlet Bareh, a Christian Khasi intellectual, the attempt to rationalise and sublimate the traditions in terms of modern values can be noticed again and again.

A Christian Naga lawyer in his book on 'Ao Customary Laws' has tried to interpret the Ao traditions of origin from rocks, as an allusion to the continuity of the culture of the Aos from the pelaeolithic past. A pastor was



made to pay a fine of Rs. 50 by his Christian followers for deriding this tradition of origin from six rocks in one of his sermons.

In course of a discussion, a non-Christian Naga professor of history stated that he did not feel it necessary to become Christian or Hindu. Their old religion has got the concept of the supreme God who is a moral being dispenser of good, and having compassion for mankind. What was necessary was to free these elements of their religion from the grocer elements which had got mixed up, due to ignorance of the forces of nature. A Kabui Naga Chief in an outlying village was also found to speak more or less on same terms.

A Christian Paite youngman stated that an intergeneration conflict was going on among the Christians belonging to his community. The educated younger persons were asserting that one need not adopt the customs of the Hebrews for becoming a good Christian. In a Naga village which adopted Christianity about 90 years ago, it has been found that in their beliefs and world views, themes of Christianity and their ancient traditions have blended together in a new synthesis.

### *Strain of Secularisation*

While in the rest of the country reorganization of the society on the basis of secular principles of humanism is a dominant theme, acceptance of the same at this stage is difficult for some of the people of the hills. It requires a measure of maturity of the society and its culture and a capacity to look upon the past of the community with certain amount of detachment. But while a new trend in this direction is perceptible among a section of the intelligenta for the mass of the people belonging to the hills, who are trying to shake off their primitive past, it is difficult to look upon the same with detachment. Recently, an educated Naga youngman stated that his people would rather try to forget that till recently they were carrying on head-hunting or some such practices. So over-whelming is their feeling about these one or two erratic practices, that it becomes difficult for them to see beyond this and appreciate that there are basic values of humanism even in their past. They tend to feel that they were wallowing in the mire of shame and were redeemed by the Christian missionaries. Thus it is a necessity for them to have particularistic attachment, whereas secularism which the rest of India is trying to attain requires universalistic detachment. There is thus a difference of levels and this difference is to be bridged through understanding, sympathy and also respect.

### *Inter-ethnic Relations*

In the past, the various tribal communities had traditions of hostility or alliances. Generally the alliances were brought about through ceremonial

friendship of individuals belonging to the different communities. Sometimes, friendships were ritually effected at group levels also.

Though the hill tribes of NEFA, Nagaland, Manipur lived in isolation as distinct entities, there were many elements of culture common among them. As a result, social boundaries of the different communities were not always rigidly defined. With changes in the power structure or in the level of economy, the various communities effected different types of alignments. For instance, the *Tagins* of NEFA sometime tended to be identified with the *Daflas*. Later on the dominant sections among them identified themselves with the *Adis*. At present some are asserting their distinct identity. This phenomenon can be described as transsociation. The same process is found in Manipur to a very large extent. A large number of tribes, like the *Anal*s, *Aimols*, *Chirus*, etc., who were in the past included under the *Kuki* constellation, are at present claiming to be *Nagas*. This sort of change of alignments is possible through selective emphasis on particular elements of culture, in response to changing situations. The process of transsociation involving some of the tribes of the hills of North East India is not confined to the boundary of the country only. It takes place across the borders involving tribal communities like *Kachins*, *Shans*, *Karens* and *Chins* of Burma and Thailand.

#### *Minority groups in the hill areas*

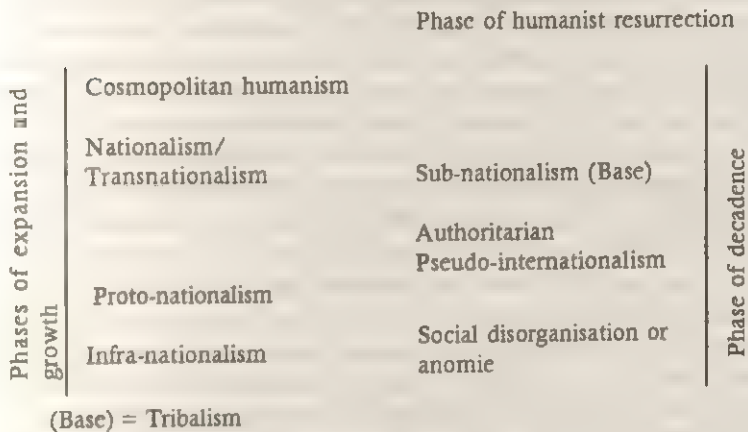
As reported by the Pataskar Commission, besides the major tribes, there are a few smaller tribes in the autonomous districts. Many of them complain of deliberate neglect of their areas for development purposes, difficulties in the matter of education of their children, incompatibility of the laws passed by the regional council with their customs and social practices and broadly describe the union of the two tribes as that of a "cat and dog tied together to one post".

The scrutiny of the proceedings of the district council of Garo Hills shows that the *Hajongs* have very frequently complained of discrimination against them. In the United *Khasi* and *Jaintias* Hill, the *Jaintias* had the same complaint. In 1963 on the recommendations of the committee appointed by the Governor of Assam, a decision was taken to establish a separate district council for the *Jaintia* Hills. In *Mizo* Hills the smaller tribes like the *Lakher*s, *Pawis* *Chakmas* are afraid of being swamped and "Lushainized" by the *Lushais*. *Chakmas* are Buddhists and even adopted Bengali script for their language. The *Paites* consider the *Mizos* too puritanical. The *Maras* belong to a different Mission, the *Lakher* Independent Mission. When the Bible Society of India did not agree to reprint the Bible in *Mara* language, due to low sale and asked the *Maras* to consider whether the *Lushai* version would be acceptable to them, their anger was roused as they felt that the *Mizos* were

behind this move.

### C. Political and Administrative Perspective

*Typology of Political Process at Community Level.* For an appreciation of the political developments in the hills of North East India a conceptual framework is necessary. The same is indicated in the diagram below:



Tribalism, in the sense of a complete negative attitude towards modern technology and contact with outside world hardly exists anywhere today. Perhaps the Jarawas of Andaman are the almost solitary instance of community in the grip of tribalism.

The phenomenon of infra-nationalism is found among the primitive people living in comparative isolation and unaware of the symbols at the nations level, who have been seized with the urge of rapidly modernizing themselves as to avail of the benefits of advanced technology. It is not possible for small communities living in isolation to enjoy the benefits of advanced technology. To become viable, the diffused commands of the small communities over their resources including the tangible resources like land, forest, etc., and intangible resources like skill, ideas and ideologies must give place to unified command of a larger society. Infra-nationalism is the phase of expansion of identity of small communities.

The next phase is that of a proto-nationalism, where new types of symbol have stabilized themselves and an elite has emerged out with vested interest in consolidating the expanded identities of the small communities. Proto-nationalism, however, derives its sanction mainly from the traditions, myths and legends of the primitive past. Nationalism is the more evolved form mainly sustained by a conscious elite with economic and ideological base

which cuts across local and regional royalties. Nationalism to stabilize itself would require a minimum technological base and also certain values of rationality and pan-human world view.

The organizational base of nationalism can be of two types:

(a) Nation society under colonial rule striving to thwart foreign domination and seize power to regulate its own affairs.

(b) Nation state with sovereign power.

Cosmopolitan humanism is based on the maturity of a people to see the unity of mankind beyond the nation state. It requires the relentless striving of a determined elite committed to the values of rationality, freedom and human dignity. But even under the phase of cosmopolitan humanism, nation-state may continue as a convenient unit for political organization.

Nationalism may degenerate into sub-nationalism or totalitarian pseudo-internationalism. In sub-nationalism the national symbols are accepted ostensibly. But at the same time, parochial loyalties become the primary consideration for political action. It generally takes place at the stage of conversion of a nation society to a nation state. In a nation society the national symbols are accepted by the different segments of the nation as a matter of grace. These are not levers to power; but in a nation state the national symbols are also levers to power and privileges for the dominant group. There is, therefore, resistance from the subdued groups. When the nation is committed to programme of welfare state, the process of sub-nationalism is accentuated. Welfare state would require maximization of the outposts, which is possible only through the strategic investment of resources. This tends to increase the gulf between the more developed regions and the less developed regions. Sub-nationalism is the by-product of this.

Totalitarian pseudo-inter-nationalism is the outcome of aborted social and economic revolution on the part of a nation state.

Both sub-nationalism and totalitarian pseudo-internationalism, by ensuing a process of negation of the moral consensus of the society, leads to anomie or social disintegration. It is a phase of atomization of individuals on a large-scale but it is also a phase, when the best sons of men are required to fight against complete self liquidation with their back against the wall. Thus the chances of a humanist resurrection are very great in this phase.

In this seven-point typology, most of the tribal communities of North East India are going through the phase of infra-nationalism or proto-nationalism or sub-nationalism. These processes are not necessarily incompatible with the processes of emergence of nationalism. It depends on geopolitical factors and the character of the nation itself, whether infra-nationalism or proto-nationalism can be incorporated in the national structure of a particular country, or whether a new type of nationalism, transnationalism, with alignments cutting across the boundaries of more than one nation state,



would emerge out.

### *Challenge to the moral greatness of Indian nation*

From the foregoing discussion, it is obvious that infra-nationalism or proto-nationalism constitutes a challenge in the Toyenbian sense to the moral greatness of a nation. The balance-sheet of the strength and weakness of Indian nationhood faced with this moral challenge is as follows:

#### *Strength*

(a) Existence of a vocal elite at the national level committed to the values of democracy, secularism and liberalism.

(b) The Constitution of India guaranteeing freedom of religion and culture to all sections of people and requiring the State to undertake measures for the socio-economic development of the weaker sections of the population.

(c) Tradition of diversity in unity in India.

#### *Weakness*

(a) Frequent compromises with forces of obscurantism tampering with the secular and democratic character of the nation. The examples are many. The adoption of Assamese as the State language, by the legislature in the face of the opposition of all minority groups, is always pointed out by the hill people of the region, as an imposition. Adoption of symbols of Hinduism in state functions, for instance, performance of a puja at the time of inauguration of the Oil Refinery in Assam, is pointed out by the non-Hindu tribals as an evidence that in spite of the formal commitment to secularism, the State has not been able to free itself from the influence of those, who would like Hinduism to be adopted as the State religion. The fact that the agitation against cow slaughter has considerable support in the country is also pointed out by the tribals as a reason for their misgivings. There is also the demonstration effect of sub-nationalism in the different parts of the country. When an industry in the public sector is established in a State, because of the agitation carried on by the people of that State, and not because of economic or technological considerations, it is very difficult to convince the tribals of the hills, that more resources cannot be invested for developing their areas, on economic ground only.

Prospect of emergence of a tribal trans-nationalism cutting across the political boundaries of India, Burma and other adjoining countries.

The possibility of this taking place should not be ruled out because of the following factors:

(a) Similarity of race, culture and traditions as described earlier;

(b) Involvement of some of the tribal communities in the borders of north-east India, Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam in separatist movements against their respective nation states; and.

(c) Organizational and ideological support provided by interested foreign powers.

It is not only China but influential lobbies in some other countries, for instance, USA, which seem to be giving moral support, if not material help to the separatist movements of the ethnic groups of north-east India and the adjoining countries. In this connection mention may be made of two articles published in June 1968 in the *London Observer*, by Crane, Director of Strategy Analysis Centre, New York, supporting the cause of the various ethnic minorities of South East Asia.

*Implication of tribal trans-nationalism cutting across the boundaries of existing nation states in S.E. Asia*

It is to be examined whether confrontation with the ethnic aspirations of the small communities constitute any moral problem for the nation-states particularly those which are committed to the values of democracy and freedom.

In this connection, the following factors are to be kept in view:

(i) *Differences in the levels of technological development.* The different tribal communities of South-East Asia are at different levels of technological and economic development. While many of them are shifting cultivators, there are communities like the Angamis, Karens, etc. which have advanced terraced cultivation and wet rice cultivation.

(ii) *Uneven levels of education.* The levels of educational development are very uneven among the communities concerned. Even in Nagaland, while the Ao and Angami Nagas have produced a large number of highly educated persons the tribes like the Konyaks, Phoms, Yimchungs have hardly any matriculate.

(iii) *Religious diversity.* Religious diversity among the various ethnic groups is also quite considerable. Among the Nagas of Nagaland the Christians constitute 56.12% of the total population, the rest are followers of other religions. In Burma and Thailand, influence of Buddhism is not insignificant among many of the tribal communities.

(iv) *Linguistic differences.* The linguistic differences among these ethnic groups are considerable. There are both Tibeto-Burmese speakers and Austric speakers among them.

(v) *Differences in political system.* As already mentioned, broadly, there are two types of political organizations among them, namely, authoritarian type and republican type. There are a few communities whose political organizations fall in various intermediate positions in this bi-polar model.

(vi) *Diversity in the pattern of interaction with the neighbouring communities.* Because of the current hostile relations of many of these communities with their respective nation-states, it should not be overlooked that frequently they had cordial relations with their neighbours in the past. They have even myths and legends of descent from common ancestors. The ethos of the surrounding great traditions have also been adopted by them in varying degrees; for instance, a section of the Nocte Nagas adopted Vaishnavism centuries ago.

If in spite of the wide range of diversity in so many vital aspects, trans-nationalism consolidates itself among the tribal and other minor ethnic groups of South-East Asia, it can be only through digging out the highest common factor of unity from the hoary past. This will stimulate process of atavistic revival of primitive past and primitive symbols and for making the structure apparently viable, there will be an unholy marriage of primitivism and modern technology. The resultant prognosis is that of the emergence of a type of neo-fascism.

It does not require much farsight to visualize that the seeds of self-destruction will be embedded in the trans-nationalistic structure in the very process of its formation. In the first phase, this may not become obvious, because, the unification of the communities, whatever may be the platform, will make them viable for incorporating certain aspects of modernism. But after a phase of development, the anachronistic nature of the structure will reveal itself with disastrous effect.

If this analysis is correct, the moral constraints of the nation States, confronted with the ethnic aspirations of the tribals and other small communities along their borders, will not require them to make adjustments in their political jurisdictions. But it should not mean that there is no moral issue involved.

The problem of potential trans-nationalism of the tribal and small communities of South-East Asia may be considered from another point of view, namely, geo-political point of view. As pointed out earlier, a trans-nationalistic structure cutting across the various nation-states in South-East Asia can be consolidated only with the organizational and other supports of interested foreign powers. This will provide the scope either for the coming back of the erstwhile imperialists by the back-door or for the spread of totalitarianism, resulting in loss of freedom and dignity of the human individuals involved. This is certainly unacceptable to the Asian countries.

### *Moral Challenge*

The awareness of the above geo-political implications of the infranationalistic movements of the tribal and other minor communities along the borders may cause two types of responses among the nation-states concerned. There is a possibility that they may try to meet the situation through sliding down to

the worst form of chauvinism. There is also a possibility that they may look upon the problem as a challenge to their moral greatness. In this connection, the nation-states concerned should perhaps try to look inward and examine what might be the causes of small communities turning against them at this moment of history. In many cases, when the nation-societies of South-East Asia attained freedom from colonial rule, the small communities within their sphere of influence, opted to co-operate with the central leadership.

Though there might have been some misgivings even at the initial stage, they violently turned against their respective nation-states only later on. The reasons for the same may be as follows:

(i) At the initial stage the small communities attached themselves to their great neighbours mainly because of their admiration for the fighters for freedom.

(ii) At a later stage, centrifugal tendencies gained strength because of the exhaustion of the moral fervour of the liberation struggle and also failure of the nation-states concerned to build up resilient economic and social structures.

It seems that the basic problem today in South-East Asia as a whole, and India in particular including the hill areas, is that of an aborted social revolution. The responsibility for composting it, does not lie with the tribals alone rather it should be borne by the rest of the nation to a greater extent.

### TASKS AHEAD

To meet the moral challenge provided by tribal infranationalism, proto-nationalism and trans-nationalism the following ideological, political and administrative measures will have to be undertaken by India:

#### (a) *Shedding Complacency*

It seems that Indian nation has a split personality. In spite of its avowed belief in, unity in diversity, there is a good deal of intolerance in Indian society. This is manifested in agitation against cow slaughter or agitation for driving away certain language from the country and so on.

(b) Integrated planning for development involving not only economic planning but also planning of political strategy and social strategy.

For integrated planning following factors in addition to the economic factors are to be kept in view:

1. Harmony of political process and the administrative and legislative processes.

2. Strategic orientation of the existing political institutions.

Harmony of political process and the administrative and legislative processes:



It seems that in the matter of national integration the key strategy of the political elite in India has been that of ensuring good administration and extending basic amenities of life to the population concerned. But it should be realized that in the context of modern democracy, there is an optimum level beyond which good administration and amenities cannot be provided, without the broadbased participation of the population concerned in the decision making processes at the different levels. Extension of amenities through good administration only, without stimulating the compatible political processes may even lead to alienation of the population concerned.

This seems to be taking place in NEFA. Undoubtedly, amenities have been provided on an unprecedented scale, but there are also signs of discontent in different parts of NEFA. People who enjoy unlimited amenities without a sense of responsibility towards the agency providing the amenities, tend to become opportunists and entertain unlimited aspirations. This inevitably leads to unlimited frustration also.

The problem of people's participation in NEFA was examined by Erring Committee in 1965. But it seems that the committee examined the question of the people's participation in development activities and judicial activities at various levels. The question of participation of the people in the political decision-making processes at the entire territory level does not seem to have received much consideration. This requires more thought.

In this connection, another question, namely, that of continuation of the Inner Line Regulation is to be examined. A study conducted by the Institute of Applied Politics, Delhi, came to the conclusion that for the economic development of NEFA a vast army of skilled manpower will be necessary and that to facilitate their availability, the Inner Line Regulation should be abolished. While there is considerable force in this argument, the psychological reaction among the tribal population concerned cannot be ignored. It seems desirable that the Inner Line Regulation should not be abolished at this moment, but at the same time it must be very much liberalized so that the various national political parties and skilled personnel may function in NEFA freely. To safeguard the economic interests of the tribal population, restriction against alienation of their land should be continued. Besides, preferences should continue to be given to the local tribals in trade, commerce and other economic activities.

The importance of appropriate political processes for promoting development activities can be appreciated from the fact that spectacular developments have taken place in Nagaland only after it attained a statehood.

#### *Strategic orientation of the existing political institutions*

The question of strategic orientation of the existing institutions is to be particularly examined in the matter of functioning of the Autonomous District

Councils of Assam. It seems that by and large the district councils are functioning as organs of local-self government with powers of legislation in the matters relating to customary laws. The different district councils have not enacted legislations in a uniform manner. The diversities are the results of inter-play of various political and other interests. A systematic and continuous analysis of the same should be made, so that the hands of the development-oriented and integration-oriented leadership can be strengthened. In other words, the district councils require to be politicized.

One significance of the district councils is to be appreciated here. These have functioned as cushions for extending the command of the State over the resources which traditionally remained under command of the local communities. In the context of the proposed Autonomous Hill State, the probable and the desirable roles of the district councils require to be examined from the points of view of administration, development and political strategy.

#### *Creation of a determined cadre for national integration*

It seems that much importance has been given to creating economic interests in support of national integration. While such an approach has considerable advantage, it should be appreciated that without an ideological base, its effectiveness is very limited. The following steps seem necessary in this connection: (a) Functioning of national political parties in the hill areas, (b) getting the hill people involved in political actions confined not only to themselves but also to other people in the different parts of the country, (c) enabling the competent hill leaders to take leadership roles on all-Indian platforms.

In the matter of creation of cadre for national integration, the problem, of creation of a national lobby for the hill areas should receive due consideration. It is desirable that the various political parties and the Members of Parliament should be kept well-informed about the implications of the different developments in North-East India. In this matter, in addition to mass media, a great responsibility would lie with the universities, departments as well as research workers attached to different organizations. But they can fulfil their role only if there is an atmosphere of freedom. It is known that quite frequently the research workers are not allowed to publish the results of their study for years after the completion of the studies. This is a positive disservice to the nation.

#### *(d) Economic Perspective*

*Nature of relationship of the tribal communities with their land resources* : Prior to the promulgation of new legislations by the respective district councils, the land tenure system in the Autonomous Hill district of Assam was guided

by Regulation V of 1896 (Chin Hills Regulation, 1896). Under this regulation, rights of the village communities as well as of the individuals over their respective territories have been recognized. After the constitution of the District Councils, the Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills, and Mizo Hills District Councils have promulgated separate legislations of their own. In the legislations promulgated by the Garo Hills District and Khasi and Jaintia Hills District Councils, with certain limitations, the rights of the village communities have been recognized and also the rights of the traditional chiefs have been continued.

The legislation enacted by Mizo Hills District Council has abolished the rights of chiefs on payment of compensation; the rights of the village communities have also been curtailed considerably, causing local resistance.

It is not unlikely that the District Council here is considered as an organ of the government. In that case the alienation of the local communities by the District Council may be a contributory factor to the Mizo revolt. It is to be noted that on abolition of the rights of the chiefs, compensations have been paid, not on the basis of the extent of land under their jurisdiction, but on the number of households under them. This seems to indicate that the rights of the chiefs were political in nature rather than economic. This aspect more clearly comes out in Purum Kuki area of Manipur. There also the chiefs are recipients of certain payments from the households under them; but the office of the chief was not hereditary. By rotation people of different clans came to hold the post.

In North Cachar and Mikir Hills, the respective District Councils have extended the Assam Land and Revenue Regulation, 1886. This Regulation has curtailed the rights of the village communities quite considerably.

In Manipur, the Administration tended not to recognize the rights of the village communities over their respective territories. Lands were taken over for the public purposes without payment of any compensation. This question was contested in the court and a decision was obtained recognizing the rights of the village communities.

In Nagaland, the Chin Hills Regulation, 1896 operates. In NEFA, Jhum Land Regulation, 1947 is in force. The Jhum Regulation, 1947 is in fact an adoption of the Chin Hills Regulation of 1896. The only significant difference is that whereas according to the Chin Hills Regulation, the customary right to Jhumming land is considered to be established in a village or a community, when the village or community has enjoyed the right to cultivate or utilize such Jhum land for not less than 5 years prior to the making of the regulation, according to the Jhum Land Regulation 1947 such right is recognized if it has been enjoyed for not less than 5 years prior to the making of the regulation. Both in Nagaland and NEFA the rights of the village communities over their respective territories have been recognized at least theoretically.

In some parts of NEFA, a village has large tracts of land under its

jurisdiction, only parts of which can be economically utilized by it. In some cases, under the jurisdiction of a village, there are sub-villages where communities, other than the dominant community, live. In such cases the people of the sub-villages are required to make some payment to the dominant community. This also seems to bring out the political relationship and not merely economic relationship of the tribal communities with their territories.

There is another aspect of the relationship of the tribal communities with their respective territories. Such territories frequently constitute symbols of the unity of the community. Any scheme of development which may cause dissociation of the tribal community from its traditional resources is therefore likely to lead to anomie or disorganization. It is desirable that development programmes should be based on continuation of the rights of the communities. They should not be given compensation at the outset, but should be granted rehabilitation subsidy. On the other hand, for three generations they should be paid dividend, on the development of their resources in addition to compensation at a graduated scale, which for all practical purposes, will be perhaps of symbolic value only. Such an approach will provide the population concerned an opportunity to adjust to the new situation and stabilize the new way of life.

### *Forest Policy*

In the context of the above analysis, it seems that forest policy in the different hill areas require to be carefully examined. According to the forest law prevailing in Assam, reservation of forest can be made only through the process of acquisition. But the Chin Hills Regulation, 1896 and Jhum Land Regulation, 1947 have stipulated that no formal acquisition proceedings would be necessary; though reasonable compensation shall be paid for the lands taken over. This stipulation does not, however, appear to be implemented in a uniform manner. In Tirap district, while bringing forest areas under reservation, the rights of the Nocte chiefs of Namsang and Baduria as well as of the village communities have been fully recognized. The net revenue of the forests is divided in the ratio of 25 : 75 between the government on the one hand and the chiefs and the villagers on the other. But of the latter, one third or Rs. 5,000 whichever is less, is credited to the chief's personal account, the rest being deposited in the people's fund. It is out of this fund that 40% preference share has been subscribed to a venner mill established at Deomali (Tirap district) to process the timber produced in the Nocte area. The remaining 60% share capital has been subscribed by the Assam Railway and Transport Company (all in equity shares).

In Nagaland, recently the Forest Department has come to an agreement with the Zeilong Range Council, under which the forest areas of that range



have been declared as Reserve Forest. The Forest Department will deduce management cost to the tune of 25% and the balance of the revenue will be handed over to the Range Council. This system of associating the local community with the development of the forest is unique in Tirap and Zeilang range of Nagaland.

Some of the tribal communities in NEFA are making a demand that the same principle should be extended to their areas also. They point out that they have the same type of right as that of the Noctes in respect of the forests in their respective jurisdictions.

### *Development of Agriculture*

In all the hill areas shifting cultivation is the prevailing form of cultivation. But in many areas wet rice cultivation and terraced cultivation have been introduced. Besides, there are orange, betel-nut, pine-apple and other plantations also.

In the strategy of development of agriculture, maximum emphasis is given to the conversion of shifting cultivation to settled cultivation, but due to the nature of the terrain, it is obvious that bulk of the area will continue to be under shifting cultivation until new type of economy comes up in the region. But only in limited areas attempts are being made to introduce scientific jhuming. By and large, this aspect of economic development has been neglected. It is to be noted that under the broad complex of shifting cultivation, there are different techniques, some of which are of more evolved form and cause soil erosion only to a limited extent. While it is not possible to completely stop shifting cultivation, much more emphasis can be given on introducing more advanced techniques of such cultivation.

### *Economic dislocation as the after-effect of the partition of India*

In Garo Hills, Khasi and Jaintia Hills and Mizo Hills, the economy was considerably disrupted due to partition. The cash crops of these regions used to be exported to the areas now belonging to East Pakistan. On the other hand they used to obtain many of their consumption needs from the markets in East Pakistan. The Assam Government had appointed three committees for these three autonomous districts to ascertain the extent of disruption of the economy and to recommend ameliorative measures. All the committees pointed out that the economic health of the districts concerned could be restored only by expanding the communication facilities several fold. They also recommended that more emphasis should be given on food crops than on cash crops. At the same time the need of establishing food processing industries was emphasized. It seems that even now communication facilities are not adequate and the capacity of the food processing industries is also limited. One of the constraints

seems to be paucity of finance. Manipur has a common arrangement with Assam in the matter of obtaining finance from Industrial Development Corporation. But there are allegations from the Manipuri industrialists that the arrangement has not functioned to their complete satisfaction.

### *Mining and quarrying industries*

A cement factory and a few coal mines are in operation in Khasi and Jaintia Hills. There are mineral resources in other areas also. But due to transport difficulties all these resources have not been adequately exploited. Besides, in some of the hill areas, for instance hill areas of Manipur, exploitation of forest resources would be difficult unless cooperation of local tribals is available to a greater extent.

### *Other Industries*

In the matter of establishment of other industries in the border areas, certain strategic considerations should be kept in view. They are as follows:

(1) In areas where there is availability of power or any scope for introducing any power and communication facilities, attempt should be made to introduce (a) mechanised and small industry, (b) industries which would serve the needs of efficient farming, (c) small industries geared to defence production, (d) improved training programmes for higher technology, (e) peripatetic training services and repairing facilities and (f) developing nucleus markets.

(2) In areas where power and technical communication facilities are lacking, emphasis should be given on (a) agro-industries generally directed to achieve self-reliance and self-sufficiency as far as possible, (b) agro-industries which could cater to defence needs, for instance, dairy produce, poultry, meat, and preserve food, (c) industries for slack agricultural seasons (handcrafts and art pieces), (d) training programmes to improve traditional skills, (e) supply of raw materials and basic necessities and purchase of surplus produce, (f) marketing facilities for exportable surplus products.

It is to be noted that some of the hill areas have dense bamboo forests, adequate to establish paper mills. Sugar industry also has scope in the region.

Even if heavy subsidy is required, several industries should be started in the region. This will introduce new outlook and new way of life among the people. Also this will instill a sense of confidence among them. Besides, establishment of industries which have markets in the plains, would create a stake for integration. Considering these direct and indirect benefits, the cost involved should not be a matter of highest importance. But the key to the industrial development would be the availability of power. The water power potential of the region is immense. But the same has still to be adequately

tapped.

In the matter of development of industries, special attention is to be given to the maintenance of the social base of entrepreneurship. In some areas it has been found that with the expansion of marketing facilities the local enterprise tend to be replaced by imported enterprise. Besides, the indigenous qualities for which some of the products have demand outside, are also lost and ultimately the market dries up. It is only with imaginative measures that such a development can be prevented.

### *Two faces of regionalization*

The strategy of development of regional economy should form a part of the over all strategy of development of the national economy. Besides regionalization has two faces. On the one hand regionalization in economic development would replace the parochial interests of the local communities by a larger interest. On the other, a tendency might grow up for lop-sided developments of the region without consideration of the total national interest. It seems that the techno-economic surveys conducted by the National Council for Applied Economic Research for the different administration units separately have not taken this aspect of the question into consideration adequately. More thought is to be given to this matter and many more studies are to be undertaken.

### *A question of basic strategy in economic development*

There is a tendency among some intellectuals to make a shibboleth of the programme of evolving socialistic pattern of society. While it is our national goal, it is to be approached through phased out tactics. It is to be noted that Soviet Russia introduced socialism in Central Asia only in the late twenties. In the first phase of the revolution in that area, more attention was given to the liberation of the people from the institutions and interests imposed by Czarism.

It seems that at this stage, while steadily laying down the base for socialistic pattern of society, there should be less talk of socialism in the hills. If the nation can swallow the Birlas, it will do no harm if a few petty leaders of industry come up from among the hill people. In the caste-ridden Indian society, this will be of symbolic value. It will enable the tribal people to participate in the national life at higher level. For national integration, not only multi-dimensional, but also multi-level participation is indispensable.

It follows from the above, that more emphasis should be given on removal of outside exploitation and nourishing local enterprise. In Manipur, out of about twenty forest contractors, only 3 or 4 are local people. In NEFA and Nagaland though preference is given to the local people. In trade and commerce, frequently outsiders control the same, under cover. Perhaps an

attempt to provide entrepreneurial training may help to meet the problem to some extent.

### CONCLUSION

From the foregoing appraisal of the various problems in the hills of North-East India, it is obvious that a mere plan of economic development would be utterly inadequate. Along with economic planning, there should be social and political planning in an integrated manner. A single agency should be entrusted with the task at the national level. At present the different aspects are being dealt with by different agencies in an uncoordinated manner. The dominant focus in dealing with the tribals of the region seems to be that they are primitive people. But this is not right. The primitive complex of the tribal communities of the country as a whole, and of North-East India in particular, is rapidly giving place to the minority complex. While at the beginning of the 1950s, a welfare approach was the appropriate one, now welfare approach should only play a subsidiary role, to the integrated political, economic and social approach.



# Towards Security in the North-East: Transportation and Nationalism

RAKSHAT PURI

The burden of my argument, stated broadly within the limited extent of this paper, is that for real security in the north-eastern region, the tribal people must be brought out of their isolation into the mainstream of Indian nationalism. The considerable increase necessary in social, cultural and economic intercourse with the rest of the country for bringing them out of their isolation requires easy transportation and communication within the region as well as between the region and other parts of India. The topography of the region, however, is hostile to fast enough development of transportation facilities under the present economic and political limitations and will consume immense capital and maintenance costs. The alternative is to follow the natural inclination of the mountains and rivers for transportation, but for this an arrangement would be necessary for unobstructed movement through East Pakistan an arrangement, it must be kept in mind that may demand as prerequisite for successful negotiation an India strong enough, in its own right, to restrain China, militarily and politically, in Asia.

## I

It might be useful to begin by enumerating and dwelling briefly on the main tribes that inhabit the north-eastern reaches of India, and indicate in passing their place in the mosaic of tribes that live in neighbouring parts of mainland South-East Asia—in Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia and southern China.

The tribal population in north-eastern India is to be found in all the administrative units in that region—in the states of Assam and Nagaland, in the Union Territories of Manipur and Tripura, and in the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA).

In Assam there are, first of all the Ahoms. They do not really come in the category of tribes, but it is useful to mention them here because they are a distinct and closely-knit community. The Ahoms are distributed mainly along the eastern parts of the Brahmaputra Valley and among foothills towards

Nagaland and eastern NEFA. They are estimated to number about three million, and once ruled most of present-day Assam. They reacted to other separatist movements in the region by forming an organization of their own, the Asom Rijyik Mahasabha, in July 1967. From accounts being published in some British and American journals, it would seem that the Ahoms have assiduously sought training for cadres in clandestine Naga military camps, to fight for restoration of Assam's pre-colonial independence. But accounts in foreign political journals tend too often to be interested.

In the southern hill districts of Assam the Garo Hills district, the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills district, the North Cachar Hills, the Mikir Hills and the Mizo district the main tribal groups are the 301,000 Garos, the 363,000 Khasis and Jaintias, the 154,000 Mikirs, the 32,000 Kacharis and the 216,000 Mizos. (The population figures are from the 1961 census.)

These tribes are very different from each other in language, customs, origin and religion though many were converted to Christianity after the influx of Christian missionaries, who also helped in increasing literacy in the region, providing some of the indigenous languages with the Latin script and alphabet. About 50 per cent of the Garo and Khasi and about 80 per cent of the Mizo tribal people are estimated to be Christian.

The Garo and the Kachari tribes claim to have originally migrated from Tibet centuries ago. The Mizo (also called the Lushai) are said to be among the most recent arrivals into the region. According to Sir Edward Gait, in *A History of Assam*, they moved into India from Burma in the first half of the nineteenth century. The oldest tribes in the area are most probably the Khasis and the Jaintias, whose languages are said to be among the last surviving dialects of the *Mon-Khmer* linguistic family in India. The area occupied by all these tribes makes up about half the entire area of Assam (excluding NEFA), but in population they make up (excluding of course the Ahoms) less than a tenth of the total—1.1 million out of 11.9 million.

In NEFA, north of the Brahmaputra valley as the plains move up into the Tibetan marches, the local population is said to consist of 82 Indo-Mongoloid tribes and sub-tribes, of which 14 are usually listed as the main tribal groups. These are the Daflas and Bangnis, Galongs, Tagins, Wanchos, Monpas, Minyongs, Mishmis, Noctes, Apatanis, Miris, Akas, Sherdukpens, Mikirs and Tangas. Since the valleys and rivers are north-south in direction, the movement of people has been in separate grooves, as it were, between Tibet and the Brahmaputra valley and not east-west, and so there has been little contact among the NEFA districts traditionally. The tribes have lived in isolation from each other mostly.

The Monpas and Sherdukpens, numbering about 20,200 and 1,150 respectively, inhabit the western-most district of Kameng. They are Buddhist, and have been strongly influenced by the Bhutanese and the Tibetans in their

customs. The Monpas are considered the most refined of the NEFA tribes. The Bannis, numbering about 25,230, also inhabit the eastern part of the Kameng district.

They are in some ways akin to the tough, turbulent and individualistic Daflas, some 35,000 in number, who live in the neighbouring Subansiri district. The Apatanis, a compact community, occupy the Aptani plateau in the centre of that district. The Tagins (8,200) and the Hill Miris (2,533) live in the northern and eastern parts of Subansiri.

The Tagins also spill over into the western parts of the Siang district. Most of the remaining part of the district is inhabited by the Galong, Padam, Pangi and Minyoung tribes, adding up to a population of about 95,000. In the northern part, along the frontier with Tibet, live the Membas and Khambas, some 3,600 in number. The Lohit district is the home of the Mishmi tribe, with about 20,000 members. The district is also inhabited by a small tribe called Khampti, which has the distinction of being the only tribe in NEFA with its own script for its language. The Khamptis are Buddhist and show Burmese influence in their customs and way of life.

Unlike the other districts of NEFA, Tirap in the east has no frontier with Tibet, but bounds on Burma. The district constitutes the northern side of the Patkoi Hills, separating the Brahmaputra valley from Burma. The tribes—Noctes (19,350), Tangsas (11,275) and the Wanchos (23,395) are similar in some respects to the Konyak Nagas of the Tuensang area in Nagaland, especially the Wanchos.

South of the Tirap district lies Nagaland. The people of Nagaland usually described broadly as Nagas, are sub-divided into 14 main tribal groups. These have been listed by the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission as Angamis Aos, Chakesangs, Changs, Khien-Mengas, Konyaks, Kukis, Lohtas, Phoms, Rengmas Sangtams, Semas Yimchungs and Zeiliangs. The largest in population are the Konyaks, numbering 63,000. The Angamis number 30,000, the Aos 50,000, the Semas 48,000, the Chakesangs 31,000, the Kukis 24,000 and the Lhotas 23,000. The total population of Nagaland is somewhat under half a million, and the average density is 22 per square kilometre (the all-India average is 124 per square kilometre).

The Angamis, Chakesangs, Zeiliangs, Kukis and Rengmas inhabit the Kohima district. The Mokochung area is home to the Aos, Lhotas, Semas and Rengmas. The Konyaks live in Tuensang district, along with Changs, Sangtams and others. The tribes are not traditionally homogenous, and each speaks its own dialect, inter-tribal communication being in either a variation of Assamese or in English. (Nagaland has opted for English as its State language). The Angamis and Chakesangs are the most developed of the tribes economically.

Naga and Kuki tribes inhabit also the Union Territory of Manipur, to the

south, making up about a third of its total population of 635,000 (in 1958: the rate of increase is 1.23 per cent annually). The main Naga and Kuki clans are Marams, Tangkhuls, Rongmeis, Kabuis, Liangmeis, Maos and Zemis. Kuki, in Manipur, is the name applied to those tribes which live in the hilly complex formed by parts of Manipur, Cachar and the Letha and Arakan hills in Burma, where the Chins live. Because of this the Kuki tribes are usually described as the Kuki-Chins. Generally, the Nagas are more widely literate and economically, better off than the Kuki-Chins.

In 1951, tribal people formed about 37 per cent of the population of Tripura, a Union Territory like Manipur, to the west of the Mizo district of Assam and jutting into East Pakistan. The largest number of Tripura's tribal people is in the Sadar division. However, the percentage of tribal people to the over-all population in Tripura is said to be highest in the Amarpur region.

The pattern of distribution of tribes in north-eastern India extends to beyond the India-Burma boundary, into mainland South-East Asia. In western Burma, the Nagas and Chins are a continuation of tribal groups in Nagaland and Manipur. To the north live the Kachins, in the "Kachin triangle" of Burma as well as in the neighbouring region of Yunnan province in China. South-eastward along both sides of the Burma-China boundary and in the Kengtung area live the various Shan tribes. The Shans are a Tai people and are to be found also in Thailand, Laos and parts of Vietnam. The Karens inhabit the eastern and south-eastern parts of Burma and the western fringe of Thailand, south of Chiangmai. North-eastern Thailand and Laos are the home of Shan and Meo tribes. In Laos, the Meos spread out north and north-west, and into southern China as well as north-western Vietnam. In addition to the Meo, Laos and Vietnam have the Kuong, Tho, Man, Nung, Moi and Chamse tribes. The Chamse is found mostly in south Vietnam and the north-eastern fringe of Cambodia, and the Man and Nung almost entirely in North Vietnam.

Meeting members of these tribes often leaves the impression (on an itinerant journalist and non-specialist, let it be emphasized) that they are ethnically related to the tribes on the Indian side, an impression strengthened by such stray factors as, for instance, that colour and pattern in textile weaving is almost invariably similar in all the tribes. But every tribe, in north-eastern India as well as mainland South-East Asia, tends at the same time to be self-contained. The way of life of the tribes and their customs are different, and their demand for separation itself tends everywhere to be separate.

## II

Almost all the tribes in north-eastern India have a history of isolation from the



mainstream of events in the sub-continent. Contacts with centres of commerce and culture were difficult to make and maintain because of arduous travel necessary in an unkind terrain. The British preferred, for colonial purposes, to encourage isolation of the tribal folk. "Inner line" restrictions were imposed on people from the rest of the country, who were as a rule forbidden to enter such areas as NEFA and Nagaland without special permission. The government of independent India has, under Jawaharlal Nehru and his successors, continued by and large the British policy of restricting the entry of Indians from other parts to these areas. This policy did not turn out to be particularly helpful in the face of Chinese attacks and hostile propaganda. According to Asok Chanda (*The Times of India*, 9 June 1969), among the Monpas "even now portraits of Mao Tse-tung, delicately woven, can be seen in stray households, garlanded, with oil lamps burning in front in reverence". One is constrained to remark that India's leaders, widely credited with vision, seem to have had little to do with foresight.

After the Chinese incursion of 1962, the reason of security has been added to the other reasons, whatever they be, for denying free entry to non-residents into these areas.

The name of the well-known anthropologist, Verrier Elwin, has featured a great deal in connection with policy in NEFA under Nehru. Elwin appeared to be something of a sentimentalist, and his approach and "philosophy for NEFA" evidently struck a responsive chord in Nehru, who adopted a policy of safeguarding the "culture" and "way of life" of the NEFA tribes by protecting them against "exploitation" by other Indians. It may be noted that such spoon-feeding and "hot-house" protection seem to have been discriminatory to the extent that they were apparently not considered important for tribes in some other parts of India such as, from all accounts, in the Bastar Area.

The result is that many tribal people in NEFA—among the few literate and young, too—seem to have developed a vested interest in remaining backward and simulating "fear of exploitation". It may seem heartless and cynical to say this, but is it possible, in the perspective of history, for any people to advance mentally and physically without suffering exploitation at the hands of others and struggling to overcome it? Men are sharpened on men.

Since 1962, considerable economic and educational progress has been claimed for NEFA, and there is no reason to be wholly sceptical of these claims. But the people of NEFA have yet to be integrated into the nation, and this will only be when roads and bridges and the railway offer easy connection with the rest of the country, and when accessibility for other Indians into the area is unrestricted.

It is true, though, that NEFA has not so far been the scene of any active separatist movement as such. Three main separatist or near-separatist

movements might be listed in the north-eastern tribal region in Nagaland, in the Assam hill districts and in Assam's Mizo district. In tackling them, the State Government of Assam has shown a pettiness and an ineptness that have been matched by delays, indecision and a curious lack of imagination in New Delhi.

The oldest and most intractable separatist movement in the region has been that of the Nagas, the seeds of which have been laid when Sir Charles Pawsey, Deputy Commissioner of Kohima, in 1945 established the Naga Hills District Tribal Council, to unite the Nagas in the task of reconstruction after the war. A small newspaper called, significantly *The Naga Nation*, was published, and later *The Naga Herald*, subsequently banned in 1953. Zapu Phizo himself and most of Phizo's top lieutenants too seem originally to have been initiated into politics by Pawsey. The mentorship of Pawsey was so effective, apparently, that in June 1947 Phizo was able to declare boldly that the Naga Hills would cease to be part of India after India's independence. Before he made his declaration, behind-the-scene parleys between the British authorities in India and their principals in London are said to have favoured a future for the Nagas separate from the rest of India. Briefly, in the months that followed, an agreement was arrived at between Sir Akbar Hydari, the Governor, and Assam's Chief Minister Gopinath Bardoloi on the one hand, and the Naga National Council led by Phizo on the other, the last clause of which was interpreted by the Nagas to mean that they would have the choice of separation after 10 years. Official statements made it clear that this was not so, and Pandit Nehru described the Naga demand as "unwise, impracticable and unacceptable".

Phizo and his followers took the issue to the jungle, and the rebellion has continued for over a decade and a half. The Nagas had experience of guerrilla fighting against the Japanese during the second world war, and in the initial and middle stages of the rebellion enjoyed almost unstinted support from the people. But the main reasons for their successes were political ineptitude at New Delhi and Shillong, and the strain upon Indian forces due to the difficulties, at places almost insurmountable, of communication and transportation. Painful changes, following an avoidable trial and error process, in political decisions along with subsequently judicious changes in the emphasis and application of military force eventually brought the situation to a favourable pass. Meanwhile, the State of Nagaland came into being in 1962, and in February 1969 even the underground participated in the general election, directly or indirectly. But the need for easy communication, the absence of which was the prime cause for misunderstanding and the sense of alienation in Nagaland, and then for frustration of New Delhi's counter-insurgency measures, remains as urgent as ever.

The other two separatist movements, the demand for "Mizoland" and

for a single entity comprising the hill districts of Assam around Shillong, were originally one movement, and the movement was for a separate state, not for separation from the country. It took shape in 1954, with the formation of the Eastern India Tribal Union, subsequently giving place to the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference. There followed the usual cycle of verbal assurance from New Delhi, unexplained delays, and obstruction by interest usually Assamese opposed to the aspiration of the hill leaders and their followers. The "Scottish pattern", the Pataskar Commission's report and Asoka Mehta's findings were debated long and heatedly.

In the process, elements in the Assam Congress Party are said to have attempted to divide the hill leaders by supporting the dissident Mizos, who were apparently encouraged to form a Mizo National Front, under the leadership of one Laldenga. Then, to the consternation of the small-time Chanakyas in the Assam Congress party, the Mizo National Front began to demand "complete separation from India", and mounted a guerrilla terrorist campaign to make the demand effective.

The demand of the hill leaders has been met to a considerable extent, and to all appearances there is, for the present, satisfaction in Shillong at the amendment of the Constitution to create an autonomous sub-state in Assam. In the Mizo district, however, the draining guerrilla war seems to be continuing, though official sources claim success in a programme of resettlement of Mizo villagers. The Mizos were regarded as good soldiers when the British were in India. Many of the hard-core guerrillas are said to be demobilized soldiers who fought in the Burma campaign during the second world war, and who have not been able to find gainful employment in the hills and have no access to opportunities elsewhere in the country. There is hardly any need to dilate on the nature of the threat that a weak, strife-torn and isolated northeast spells for India. Much has been said and written about such a threat. It is not that the danger of direct attack from China or Pakistan is imminent, though it might be well to bear in mind that conspicuous vulnerability attracts aggression. There is little doubt that Pakistan has been giving arms, training, shelter and opportunity for regrouping to the Mizo rebels though one supposes that such support would be limited by strategic considerations of the possibility of unintentionally encouraged guerrilla action in the Chittagong hill tracts. Nor is there any remaining doubt of Chinese arms and intervention in the region not after the capture of China-returned underground Naga "General" Mown Angami with some of his men.

### III

To neutralize this threat, it is no use expending valuable time, energy and

resources on fighting the symptoms, as the government seems to be doing generally in the region. The problem will have to be dealt with from the roots up, and that involves urgent and effective measures to end the isolation of the tribes and of their districts from the rest of the country. To end the isolation and bring the tribal people into the social, economic and cultural mainstream of the country, the first requirement is to establish and improve roads, rails, bridges, telegraph for easy contact, movement and commerce, and to remove the "inner line" restrictions which prohibit non resident people from freely visiting or settling in areas such as NEFA and Nagaland.

The importance of easy transportation and communication in the consolidation of nationhood has been duly recognized. Indeed, geopolitics has been described as essentially the study of the relation between transportation and politics, in geographical terms. Commenting on this, Roy Wolfe, as geographer in the Planning Division of Canada's Department of Highways, has written aptly that in any nation "the authority emanating from the centre must be compelling at the farthest reaches of the state, more than that of any nearby state, no matter how powerful, and no matter how much closer the neighbouring state's centre of authority is to the common boundary".<sup>1</sup> This assumes highly developed transport facilities. The progressive spread of a network of roads and railways, to help colonialism, played in the end a major role in the ripening of Indian nation-hood, and eventually in the destruction of colonialism in India. In China, tenuous transportation links have traditionally involved the imperial government at Peking to struggle continuously for control over outlying territories, and warlords have invariably risen and flourished. It is notable that the present rulers of China laid primary emphasis on road building for consolidation almost as soon as they captured power.

However, Canada seems to offer an example more appropriate to us in India. The Federal Government of Canada used transportation in a deliberate effort to unify the region into a nation. In 1839 Lord Durham, sent to Canada to study the causes of the 1837 rebellion, recommended that a railway be built to support the union of all then-existing Canadian provinces from the Atlantic seaboard to the eastern shore of Lake Huron. Some 25 years later the railway was extended to New Brunswick. The railway was uneconomical for most of its length, but the reason for building it was political, and it did achieve its purpose of nation-building.

The "topographical shredness" of the Canadian statesmen in successfully building the railway for achieving maturity of nationhood, despite the fact that it went against economic logic, is worthy of praise and emulation. But with all the "topographical shrewdness" in the world, the Indian

<sup>1</sup> *Transportation and Politics*, by Roy I Wolfe, D. Van Nostrand Company, Princeton, New Jersey, USA.



Government may not find itself able to adequately and soon enough improve and build the necessary roads and rails and bridges to enlarge the connection between north-eastern region and the rest of the country. What has been done so far is negligible to what needs to be done, howsoever impressive it may seem. The physical features are hostile to improvement and construction of transport facilities, and the cost of the undertaking would be prohibitive, to put it mildly.

In NEFA, a jeepable road does connect Tawang to Tezpur through Bomdila, to the extended northward. Pasighat is connected with the Brahmaputra valley. A few other places in NEFA too are connected with the Brahmaputra valley by jeepable road, but east-west road connesctions are noticeably few. District headquarters are mostly approachable only through Assam. The vertical movement, and the lateral isolation, as mentioned earlier, are explained by the fact that the valleys and the rivers in NEFA run north-south.

The same kind of physical features characterize the other areas in the north-eastern region. The roads constructed have been meant essentially to connect administrative centres in Nagaland and Manipur in the east and Tripura and the Mizo district in the west with points on the arterial transport links in the Brahmaputra valley. National Highway No. 39 connects Golaghat with Imphal, passing through Dimapur and Kohima. From this trunk route a number of small roads, bridle paths and mule tracks go to other villages and towns. From Mokokchung, a road connects with the Aniguri railhead in Assam. There is no railway either in Nagaland or Manipur. Dimapur is the only railway station, and it is about 160 kilometres from Jorhat on the main line between Silliguri and Dibrugarh.

As for Manipur, the Imphal-Dimapur road is the only connecting link between that territory and the rest of the country. In Manipur itself, there are no roads to speak of; bridle paths connect villages and shake away into the hills and valleys and jungles.

South-westward, in the Mizo district and in Tripura, the difficulties of transportation are even more pronounced. In the Mizo district, a road coming from Silchar goes to Demogiri on the East Pakistan border, passing through Aijal and Lungleh. Its natural extension ought perhaps have been onward to Rangamati and the seacoast, but Rangamati and the seacoast, though not far from Demogiri, are in East Pakistan. From Silchar a main road goes also to Agartala in Tripura. But in Tripura there are numerous streams and rivers which have to be bridged – a problem that generally besets the north-eastern region and it is estimated, in a techno-economic survey of the territory by the National Council of Applied Economic Research, that at least ten important bridges would need to be constructed before transportation can approximate to requirement.

In Tripura, as well as in the Mizo district, in Manipur and in Nagaland,

the principal hill ranges run north to south, and the drainage generally is west-and-south-westward. This makes for a natural transportational movement towards the rest of India through East Pakistan. Before the partition of 1947, the entire hill region south of the Brahmaputra valley connected easily, through Tripura, or Silchar and Karimganj, or by waterways, with the rest of the country towards Dacca and Calcutta, or via Comilla to Chittagong.

After the partition, the development of transportation has had to be an attempt to go contrary to the natural inclination of the terrain, and to route passengers and goods through the Siliguri "neck", after "connections" and trans-shipment at various "collecting" points in Assam. This already very heavily crowded route, it is hardly necessary to re-emphasize, is expensive, inadequate and unsatisfactory, and is likely to remain so. And air transport, however widely remified, can never replace surface movement.

Considering this, one is amazed afresh every time one thinks upon the Indian leaders' volte-face—the curiously easy acceptance, after they had repeatedly committed themselves against it, of a division of the sub-continent which, apart from other things, brought with it boundaries that were geographically bizarre, culturally artificial and economically untenable. The expenditure involved in battling to subdue nature in order to make these boundaries viable, and the subsequent maintenance costs in keeping it subdued, are likely to be astronomical. In addition, the threat to security from hostile neighbours in circumstances which are likely to prolong India's weakness and vulnerability should not be under-estimated.

The obviously sensible way out of the difficulty would be an arrangement whereby access to the rest of the country from its north-eastern reaches becomes available through East Pakistan. For this, the choice for action would seem to be between an attempt to exchange territory with Pakistan and an attempt to arrive at a broadbased agreement for cooperation with Pakistan, somewhat on the model of the Indo-Nepal agreement. As stated in the introductory paragraph, any such attempt is unlikely to be finally successful unless and until India has been strengthened to become a reckonable power in its own right, capable of restraining China militarily and politically in Asia. If and when the attempt is successful, it would neutralize the deleterious effects of partition on India as well as Pakistan.

The suggestion for exchange of territory with Pakistan appears to have been first made by the late M.N. Roy a one-time colleague of Stalin in a communication to Nehru shortly after the 1947 partition. Roy is said to have suggested that the Government of India should try to effect an exchange of Kashmir for East Pakistan. The suggestion evidently took into account the fact of easy national consolidation possible then for West Pakistan with Kashmir and easy economic and logistical accessibility possible for India with East Bengal. Nehru does not seem to have recorded any reply to M.N. Roy.

The suggestion has off and on been vaguely and ineffectually echoed in some quarters since it was first made. But it has been usually described as impracticable, and this is doubtless true to some extent. When the suggestion was made by Roy, the concept of an Islam-based nationalism was still strongly upheld in East as well as West Pakistan. Today, although recent developments in Pakistan, prior to General Yahya Khan's assumption of power have clearly suggested that the concept is more myth than anything else, it is difficult to ignore other insistent factors such as the psychological consolidation of a Pakistani nationalism in the last two decades, the indispensable contribution of the eastern wing to Pakistan's economy, which Kashmir can hardly replace, and so on.

The alternative—a broadbased India-Pakistan agreement for co-operation, somewhat on the model of the Indo-Nepal agreement—would, if achieved, eventually make it possible for Pakistanis and Indians to travel, trade, live, work and buy property freely and without permits, passports and visas in India and Pakistan. The need for this in Pakistan is as great as, perhaps even greater than, in India. The agreement would provide Pakistan with urgently needed facilities for communication and transportation between its two wings, and afford relief to the increasingly dense population of East Pakistan. People in East Pakistan do not find it easy or feasible to go to their western province more alien to the East Pakistani than in Assam or West Bengal despite the common Islamic religions and are beginning to feel "bottled up" in the eastern province. The situation in Pakistan generally is heading towards a dangerous population imbalance which may have unpleasant political consequences for that country. The fact that a few thousand people are able to spill over into Assam from East Pakistan every year makes practically no difference to the nearing population explosion in East Pakistan.

An India-Pakistan agreement for cooperation might, incidentally, enable much-needed regular dredging and clearing operations as well as flood control measures in the Brahmaputra. This can only be done by India and Pakistan together. If good sense prevails in good time, such an agreement could become specific part of an overall, increasingly necessary effort for a broadbased economic and cultural cooperation arrangement.

There are of course hard political obstacles to such cooperation. But there is need for imagination and daring in New Delhi as well as Islamabad. Politics is transitory "directionable", as it were and must eventually tend to the national interest. The stakes in cooperation are high for both India and Pakistan, and it would be wise to recognize that both countries in the years to come will sink or swim together, whether Islamabad and New Delhi like it or not. This should be good enough reason for an agreement on cooperation enabling free movement and exchange between the two countries.

Only in this way can India overcome the limitations imposed by an unnatural and artificial boundary on economic development and internal

cultural exchange, and on the movement of people and goods to and from its north-eastern hill region. The integral sense of community among the tribes themselves and between the tribes and the rest of the country will come primarily through easy communication and transportation, enabling social intercourse. Security in the north-eastern region will replace vulnerability and weakness only when such a sense of community has developed. The frontiers of a nation are first of all established in the mind of its people, and when thus established) they are indestructible.



# Understanding the Tribals on the North-eastern border

D. R. MANKEKAR

This paper starts from the premises that the assimilation and integration of the north-eastern border tribes into the Indian nation is a paramount task before us not only because of national and strategic considerations but also for humanistic reasons.

For, national, strategic and humanistic considerations alike demand that peace, tranquillity, contentment and orderly progress should be fostered in this vital and vulnerable region which has been historically the route of foreign invasions from the east.

This paper, therefore, seeks to identify the obstacles and barriers that stand in the way of such assimilation and to discuss measures that could demolish those barriers and accelerate the process of integration.

Many are these obstacles and barriers. But the most stubborn of them all is our ignorance and lack of knowledge about the tribals of this remote region. Ignorance breeds distrust which, in its turn, sows ill-will and hostility, whereas knowledge leads to understanding, and understanding generates goodwill and trust.

This ignorance and outdated knowledge about the tribal people of north-eastern India are, in my view, largely responsible for much of the administrative bungling and misjudgment and the consequent wrong decisions on the part of policy-makers in distant Delhi and their executors on the spot.

Thus, J.H. Button, the greatest authority on the tribes of north-eastern India, has very rightly emphasised that a just and enlightened administration of tribal affairs cannot be established and pursued without an intimate knowledge of and sympathetic interest in the tribals themselves, their customs and their point of view.

The other, almost insuperable, barrier that has cut off these tribals from the rest of the country for 150 years, was raised by the British rulers of the period who pursued a deliberate policy of isolating the tribal people and sowing in their hearts distrust for the plainmen.

The isolation of the tribals was further accentuated by the advent of the Western Christian missionaries in the region. Backed and protested by the British Administration, these missionaries converted the tribals to Christianity in large numbers and reclaimed them to civilization and, in the

process, raised yet another wall, cultural and religious.

The NEFA tribes are as much alienated from the rest of India as those of the Assam Hills, thanks largely to inaccessibility and lack of communications in an area, many points of which are linked only by helicopter. These tribes are mostly animists and are more backward, and even the Christian missionaries have failed to penetrate their difficult country. In this under-administered region the danger springs from Chinese infiltration, espionage and subversion among a people many of whom claim racial and cultural kinship with Chinese-occupied Tibet across the border. In NEFA however the Shanti Sena has done some good work.

This triple barrier, in existence for over a hundred years, has served to seal off the tribals of north-eastern India from the rest of the country. The formidable task before our generation therefore is to demolish this triple barrier a task calling for much wisdom, statesmanship and tact and patience.

Thus, the constant contact that subsisted over the centuries from the Puranic times, between the plains people and the tribals of Assam, whether through confrontation in wars and raids or through peaceful trade and intercourse, suddenly ended with the advent of the British rule in the territory.

There can be no two opinions however that the early Christian missionaries earned and deserved the gratitude of these tribals, to whom they brought a humanistic religion and modern civilisation in place of a primitive way of life. These pioneering missionaries ventured into the wilds of the Assam hills at great personal sacrifice and established lone missions and proselytised. They invented the alphabet for them, translated the Christian hymns into their languages and brought them education. They cured the tribals of customs like head hunting and inculcated in them Western and Christian concepts of life and ethics all of which only further served to alienate the tribals from the populace and culture of the rest of the country.

India as a whole should however be grateful to the early Christian missionaries for helping these tribals to make the big leap forward from primitive life to modernity and thus taking off the overweighted shoulders of Independent India that gigantic task and preparing them to take their due place in Indian polity. For as citizens of a secular and democratic India, we should not be concerned with the religious faith of the tribals or any section of the Indian people, but rather with their patriotism and loyalty to the Indian Union.

Suspicion and distrust are however irrational passions which cannot be rooted out by external reasoning but have to be broken down through internal conversion and conviction. This can best be done not by outsiders but by the tribals' own kith and kin. To this end, therefore, we have to enlist the zealous cooperation of indigenous Christian missionaries. There are hardly any foreign missionaries functioning in this region these days.

These indigenous Christian missionaries would, to my mind, be too

happy to undertake the noble mission of reclaiming their tribal flock to the Indian nation; for they seem to be acutely conscious of the disservice rendered by the early Western Christian missionaries in seeking to isolate them from the mainstream of Indian life. Possibly they would now be willing to avail of the opportunity to atone for the past through good works in the present by helping the Indian administrators to integrate the border tribals into the body politic of India. Rev. R.M. Pregh in his speech at the national seminar on Hill People of North-Eastern India, held at Calcutta, in December 1966, echoed the hopes and sentiments of many an Indian Christian missionary when he stated: "As Christianity is gracefully accepted by the majority community as one of the religions of India, and as its adherents are given full protection to practise their own religion, the loyalty of the tribal Christians to the great Indian society will grow and national integration will grow apace, converting the north-eastern region of India into a strong bulwark against any inroads from external enemies."

There is however an obligation cast upon the majority community in the country to take the initiative in that task and accelerate the process.

The church leaders of Nagaland, for example and this equally applies to other tribal areas of Assam are profoundly impressed with the secular character of our Constitution and of the guarantees of freedom of worship that it offers to the minorities and adherents of other religions. They are also greatly enthused over the enlightened democratic system prevailing in our country which guarantees equality of rights to all citizens of India, irrespective of their race or religion.

These church leaders are anti-communist, and many of them were unanimous, in the view expressed to me in conversation, that the interests of the Christian tribals were safest in secular and democratic India. Indeed, it is the church leaders' powerful opposition to the Naga rebels' overtures to communist China that was primarily responsible for the current disintegration of the Naga underground movement.

The best way of enlisting the cooperation of the indigenous church leaders is therefore to convince them that these constitutional guarantees of freedom of religion and secularism of the State would be enforced honestly and sincerely by the present rulers of the country. Their efforts could of course be profitably supplemented by secular welfare organisations like the Shanti Sena or such reputable voluntary institutions as the Ramakrishna Mission whose disinterested service and unobjectionable activities should be welcome to the tribals of the Assam Hills.

The political movements in the tribal belt of north-eastern India are all led by Christians. They are deeply religious people and their minds are greatly influenced by the church and its leaders. Nevertheless, they have been Christians for hardly four generations and therefore psychologically, temperamentally and environmentally they have not changed much. Indeed,

it would be no exaggeration to say that in the process of christianising the pagans, Christianity has been paganised among the tribals of the Assam Hills.

Thus describing the metamorphosis of Christianity in this region, Rev. Michael Scott, the champion and friend of the Nagas, writes:

Out of the religion brought by American Baptist Missionaries, who loved them (Nagas) and were welcomed amongst them as friends, they (Nagas) have made something of their own and in no way incompatible with their own zest for life and for the songs and dances, animated by beings and beliefs which they have not discarded and see no incongruity in retaining along with their beliefs in the powerful reality of God, the driving force of creation and of purpose in their lives and all life yet no one could possibly describe them as a pious or even a moral people. There is a fierce quality in them which is capable of terrible retaliation. . . . There is also a streak of cruelty which is part of the texture of their life as it has come to be woven into a pattern out of the hard and harsh raw materials of existence. It is as visibly there, as the qualities of gaiety, friendship and generosity, however the preachers may deplore it.

Reinforcing the aforementioned triple barrier of isolation, distrust and prejudice are the suspicions generated by the political ferment currently enveloping this border tribal belt which in at least two instances has, because of either mishandling or imperviousness on the part of New Delhi, escalated into secessionist demands.

The winds of change are blowing as gustily in the tribal belt along the north-eastern border as in the rest of India. The literacy among many of these tribes is much higher than the average in the rest of the country. Indeed among the Mizos the figure is 40 percent and among the Nagas and other tribals it exceeds 30 per cent and much of this literacy is in the English language. As democracy marches on in the country, political consciousness and aspirations grow among the tribals as much as among the other sections of the Indian people.

Thus the revolution of rising expectations that has swept over this land in the last 20 years of independence and democracy has not left the tribals untouched. Nor have the tribals been exempted from the subsequent revolution of rising frustrations. Thus, when the Assam Hill tribes demand an autonomous State of their own within the Indian Union, they are as much giving expression to their legitimate political aspirations for self-identity as the people of Maharashtra or Tamil Nadu did a decade ago.

They are not asking for secession from the Indian Union, but only seeking a political status within the Indian Union. This is no crime nor treason. Nor is it correct to assume that such a concession would lead to secessionism indeed, on the contrary, it might result in the strengthening of the bonds with the Indian Union.



However, while it is but right that the legitimate political aspirations of an ethnic group among the citizens of India deserve to be satisfied, it is equally vital that the strategic security of this vulnerable region should not in any way be jeopardised. Nor can it be denied that this vulnerable region, stretching from NEFA and Assam to Manipur and Tripura, is strategically and economically one unit and has to be treated as such.

The ultimate solution for this problem is obviously a federal structure embracing the entire north-eastern region providing for a regional legislature and executive at the apex, side by side with State legislatures and executives for each of the component states with the regional set up tied up with the Indian Union as a constituent unit. Such a denouement may not be immediately practical or realisable, as any such suggestion at this moment may arouse the suspicions and hostility of the component states of the region.

For the present, therefore, a non-official Regional Council, for the entire region, as suggested by B. K. Nehru, Governor of Assam, is all that can be mooted. Such a Regional Council, on which would be represented all the states of the region, should ultimately concern itself with internal security, planning, economic development, communications, coordination and certain other common subjects and services entrusted to the state administration in the rest of the Indian Union.

Understanding the tribes of the north-eastern border is indeed a complex problem, which obviously cannot be tinkered with and needs to be studied methodically and in depth, through research in all its manifold aspects—historical, geographical, cultural, socio-economic, political and even psychological.

As I said earlier in this paper, a more thorough and up-to-date knowledge about the tribal people of this region on the part of the administrators on the spot and, more particularly, on the part of the policy-makers in remote New Delhi, could have avoided the bungling, blundering and misjudgment of situations that we have witnessed in the handling of the Naga problem or in the tardiness displayed in tackling the Mizo demand or meeting the APHLC's plea for a hill state of their own in Assam.

It is amazing but true that much of the literature available on the north-eastern tribals is at least 50 years old and therefore completely outdated in the context of the conditions currently obtaining in the region. During the British days brilliant officers dedicated their lives to the service of these tribals and, in the process, came out with specialised study and research on various aspects of the tribal life and problems and produced quite a few books on the subject. I can think of hardly any book published in the last 20 years which can claim to add any valuable information on the subject.

Indeed, here I would like to digress a bit, with your permission, and relate a personal experience. In 1966, on my return from a four-week visit to Nagaland and other Assam tribal areas, I wrote a few articles on the subject

in *The Times of India* and some other papers. Thereupon, I was invited by the Social Studies Circle of St. Xavier's College, Bombay, to address them on the subject of Nagas. I pointed out to the professor incharge that I was no anthropologist and therefore I could speak to the students only on the political aspect of the Naga problem. The professor however insisted on my addressing the students.

I naturally tried my best to put more anthropological content into my talk. Later on, to my surprise, I found out that the Naga tribes was a subject prescribed for the M.A. course by the Bombay University and they lacked text-books and therefore were anxious to get me to give them a talk on the subject.

This incident again illustrates my point, namely, the extreme paucity of literature on such vital subjects as the tribals of north-eastern India who have for two decades constituted a major headache to the Government of India. One would have expected that the appropriate ministries or departments of government would have taken the initiative and encouraged research study and built up literature on the subject.

Faced with similar problems and difficulties, the Government of Communist China established an Institute of Minorities in Peking. This Institute specialises in research and study-in-depth of the life, language, religion, culture and problems of the tribal minorities inhabiting the periphery of China and gives master's degrees and doctorates for research done in the field. In the process, China has built up a vast body of knowledge, both current and historical, so vital to effective and efficient administration of the tribal areas.

In addition, of course, this Institute of Minorities also picks up batches of promising young people from the tribal areas, put them through a rigorous course of ideological brainwashing and indoctrination into Chinese patriotism and nationalism, designed to obliterate any parochial regional sentiment among the young people. These boys, after a course of 10 or 12 years of this kind of education, are sent back to their home regions, to become leaders of the community and inject among their people affection, reverence and patriotism for China as a whole, while ensuring the establishment of the communist way of life among the local community.

I would therefore strongly support the idea mooted at a seminar held in Calcutta a year ago, to establish a Himalayan Foundation dedicated to building up a body of knowledge and information on tribal affairs. I have not the least doubt that such a foundation will fill a vital void in the body politic of India. The Government of India would do well to initiate such a project.

Such an institution might very well take a leaf from the Peking Institute of Minorities and foster scholarship, research and study in depth of tribal affairs, while providing specialised course of training and education to batches

of hand-picked young men from among the tribals who could be sent back to their homes to assume leadership of their community and help the process of assimilation and integration.

This institute could also offer special courses to probationers in the Frontier Administrative Service, designed to impart to them specialised knowledge about the people and territory they were being called upon to administer.

Above all, to this paramount task of assimilating the north-eastern tribals into the Indian nation, should be harnessed the powerful modern mass media radio, television, film and the printed word through a well thoughtout, systematic and comprehensive publicity-cum-public relations campaign, designed to breakdown psychological resistance in the shape of prejudice and distrust and with the tribals' hearts. For, that is where the final clinching victory has to be won in this battle.

# Some aspects of Political Development in the North-Eastern Hill Areas of India

M.N. SRINIVAS

and

R.D. SANWAL

## INTRODUCTION

Though the North-Eastern Hill Areas (briefly, NEHA) of India have, since comparatively recent times, attracted the attention of the press in India and abroad on account of such events as the Naga and Mizo revolts or the demand for a separate hill state in Assam, most Indians outside the region seem to be only hazily aware, if at all, of the problems of the region and of the import of these for emerging Indian nationhood. To most Indians, the NEHA is a far-off place where some kind of trouble seems to be always brewing. This impression of distance as well as difference is strengthened by historical and geographical factors. The north-eastern region is connected with the rest of India by a narrow strip of land, and communications between the two as well as within the region have never been as good as they ought to be. As has been demonstrated many times, even regular calamities such as floods cut off the north-east from the rest of India. (In October 1968, for instance, this region was cut off from the rest of India for nearly six weeks.)

Politically, many parts of the NEHA were administered, until independence, in a manner different from the plains regions in the north-east, and culturally, most of the north-eastern hill regions have till recent times remained relatively little affected by events and developments in the rest of India. Independence with its constitutionally-guaranteed educational, political, economic and other advantages have contributed significantly to widen the socio-political universe of the once isolated or nearly isolated tribal communities in NEHA. Progressively increasing contact with other tribal and non-tribal peoples and cultures, particularly the latter, have, however, contributed to highlight cultural differences and enhance the awareness of collective self-identities amongst the hill peoples. The tendency on the part of the regional segment of the national majority to adopt an attitude of superiority towards the hill peoples has been instrumental in negating whatever positive advantages such increased



interaction could have had for the growth of a feeling of unity between the people of the hills and others. The majority's attitude towards the tribal minorities has, however, brought the minorities more closely together in opposition to the dominant majority. Also the competition for the benefits of economic and political development between different sections of the people, especially between the tribal and non-tribal sections, has been responsible for increasing tensions between the two.

The extension of civil administration into many parts of NEHA which under the British were either isolated or only marginally administered, the drawing of international boundaries in this part of India with greater rigidity, the existence of a large number of culturally as well as ethnically different tribes, and the keen interest shown by our hostile neighbours in creating tensions in the border regions in India, have all contributed to impart cruciality to an otherwise normal process of nation-building in NEHA.

The so-called 'separatist' tendencies amongst some of the NEHA tribes were initially only natural attempts on their part to define their socio-cultural identity *vis-a-vis* the others in the new circumstances of Independence. For most tribes in NEHA the experience of being integral parts of a nation is relatively recent and their difficulty in quickly and unqualifyingly accepting this fact needs to be sympathetically viewed.

International boundaries in this region are being drawn with increasing rigidity only during the last twenty years or so, and not always with reference to ethnic-cultural boundaries with the result that in many cases segments of the same ethnic group have found themselves on different sides of an international boundary. This accident of history imparts a further element of cruciality for emerging Indian nationhood and its potentially harmful consequences for the nation need to be neutralized in the present international situation (particularly in the context of Chinese and Pakistani unfriendliness towards India). It is important for us not only to know intimately the aspirations and problems of the tribes in NEHA but to find ways to reduce, if not remove, the causes of their disaffection and to help them achieve their aspirations within the framework of social justice, and broadly-defined national interests.

It is against this historical and geo-political background that the problems besetting the country in NEHA have to be viewed and analysed.

#### A PROBLEM IN NATION BUILDING

The most important socio-political problem which the country is facing in NEHA is primarily that involved in nation-building, that is, of creating a morally unified political community out of a multitude of ethnically and culturally discrete communities between which sufficient understanding does not exist. In simpler terms a sense of integration with the rest of the

country is rather weak in NEHA and needs to be strengthened. Some of the more important factors responsible for this weakness have been briefly enumerated in the first section. Here we would like to confine ourselves to an examination of the problem of national integration in the context of NEHA.

The problem of integration is not unique to NEHA. It exists not only elsewhere in India and in virtually all the newly-independent emerging nations of the world but also in old and politically and economically developed nations of the world. Welsh antipathy to the English and the slogan of an autonomous Wales is an example of insufficient integration between these two segments of the British nation. But problems of integration appear to be even more acute in "nations" the human components of which are divided into distinct groups and categories on the basis of race, language, religion, caste and region. However, as can be seen from the example of Switzerland or the USSR, ethnic-cum-cultural pluralism by itself is not an insurmountable impediment to the growth, among the different sections involved, of a sentiment of belonging to the nation. But it does make the development of integration among the different sections involved a delicately balanced affair which can be upset by a variety of factors some of which may seem irrelevant or unimportant.

Blaming the 'rebelliousness', 'inherent separatism', or similar other 'ills' of the NEHA tribes upon such favourite whipping horses as the 'legacy of colonialism', 'conservatism of the tribes', 'ethnic myopia', or 'activities of foreign missionaries', only helps in diverting attention from identifying the real factors responsible for weak integration.

In sociological literature the term 'national integration' has been used to mean several things, though all are related directly or indirectly to the evolution of a politically unified community. Myron Weiner (1965: 52-64) identifies five uses of the term "integration", viz. (i) "national integration" or "The integration of diverse and discrete cultural loyalties and development of a sense of nationality", (ii) "territorial integration", (iii) "value integration", (iv) "elite-mass integration, and (v) "the integration of individuals into organization for purposive activity". It is, however, simpler and more useful to think of national integration as one process having two aspects: administrative/political integration, and emotional integration.

Administrative/political integration involves the general acceptance by a majority of the people of a country of an administrative network covering every part of that country. Political integration can be established and sustained, within limits, by means of coercion as under colonialism, and does not have to depend on emotional integration for its existence. Emotional integration involves the acceptance of a common and consistent set of values, norms and attitudes by most, if not all the sections, of a country's population. The intensity of the integration depends on the extent

of institutional areas in regard to which value consensus exists. Emotional integration provides the only stable condition for the emergence of healthy and lasting nationhood.

At the present moment in India, though political integration through effective administrative control has largely been achieved (except, perhaps, in pockets in Mizo hills and Nagaland where small, insignificant sections of the tribal communities continue to engage in subversive activities), emotional integration or integration in terms of acceptance by the people of a common set of values, understandings and norms, has yet to be achieved.

It is important to recognize right at the outset that the task of achieving emotional integration in a country of the size and diversity of India is far from easy, and does not automatically flow from administrative control and economic welfare schemes. Emotional integration is not a one-way process and requires adjustments on the part of both the majority and minority. Integration is a dynamic phenomenon and it grows out of sustained interaction. The smoother and more understanding this interaction, the quicker the pace of emotional integration.

#### INTEGRATION VERSUS ASSIMILATION

Not infrequently 'integration' is treated as synonymous with 'assimilation', usually by undiscerning politicians and bureaucrats and sometimes also by scholars (for an example of the latter see Deutsch, 1953). This is really unfortunate. Integration must be distinguished from assimilation. Assimilation involves a total loss of cultural identity for the group that is being assimilated and its absorption into the dominant group on the latter's terms. The minority's fear of losing its cultural identity to the majority makes it suspicious of the majority's actions. This leads to increasing alienation of one from the other. In a democratically open society like contemporary India, the minority usually develops defence mechanisms aimed at safeguarding its cultural identity. This seriously hinders the acceptance of a minimum set of values, norms and understandings so essential for nationhood. Building a nation should not involve the removal of cultural differences between communities. Widespread acceptance of such values and norms as democracy, secularism, equality of opportunity and freedom of thought and speech, is, however essential. Concomitantly, there should be the growth of economic interdependence and the development of communication (social as well as symbolic) between the different segments of the population.

The values and norms mentioned above have to be put into practice by the regional segment of the national majority if the confidence of the tribal minorities in North-East India is to be gained. A great deal of what is

happening in NEHA today can be related to the tribal elite's fear of losing their cultural identity in the ocean of Hindu nationalism. Many amongst the regional segment of the national majority not only want the tribal people in NEHA to be culturally assimilated into Hinduism but also want it to occur on the majority's terms, that is, at the lowest level of the socio-ritual hierarchy. The minority's reactions are rather mildly phrased by a Naga intellectual: "Today in India nationhood is still in a process of becoming. Many talk about incorporating or assimilating the minorities into a larger society under the concept of equal citizenship. India is declared to be secular state but there (are) visible signs of the nation becoming a monolithic society where the majority may define the limits of national society and where the majority the often confused with the national society" (Moasosang, 1967: 55).

Attempts to produce cultural uniformity and integration through induced assimilation can be dangerous. India has always been heterogenous in terms of race, language, religion and culture. The essence of Indian unity lies in this diversity, and any attempt towards unity to succeed must be within the framework of this cultural, religious and ethnic pluralism. Even the institution of caste which has nearly an all-India spread and provides a common cultural idiom for the national majority unites by dividing people. India provides one of the most extreme expressions of cultural pluralism and the only hope for the emergence of a feeling of nationhood in India lies in working towards emotional integration and not toward assimilation. Even in the USA the emphasis has shifted from "Americanization" of the myriad immigrant ethnic groups to their accommodation in a pluralistic system. This can be seen strikingly in the case of the Negro during the last six or seven years. It is indeed a pity that the governments of democratic nations of the world, notably of European deviration, have adopted tribal policies aimed at either assimilating or annihilating their tribal minorities without any reference to the latter's wishes. Some nations have tried to adopt a 'put them into reservations' policy, often with pressures for assimilation into the culture of the dominant majority. What kind of an attitude, what kind of policy do we in India adopt in regard to the tribal minorities within our national boundaries? Some seem to suggest that the process of assimilation into Hinduism which has been going on in India over the ages should be encouraged. Others have felt that the tribes be paternalistically allowed to develop according to their own genius in semi-isolation. The latter is the viewpoint held by those who have been administratively concerned with our tribal minorities. Though academically interesting and seemingly sound, the most serious defect with this viewpoint is that it is anomalous in the conditions obtaining in an India that is rapidly entering the industrial age. Technological advance can no more go hand in hand with isolation than can democratic secularism with an assimilationist ideology.



NEED FOR A FRESH VIEWPOINT ON THE NATURE OF  
MINORITY-MAJORITY RELATIONSHIP IN THE CONTEXT  
OF NATIONAL INTEGRATION

We in India have not given the tribal people in the North-East or any- where else in the country, the kind of economic, administrative, political and educational attention which they require. In fact, few nations in the world have shown an enlightened concern for their tribal minorities and this is notwithstanding the available sociological expertise. Foremost among the nations which have seriously taken up the welfare of their tribal minorities in keeping with the national interest is, perhaps, the USSR. Following the USSR, China and other communist nations in Asia have also shown organized and national goal-oriented concern for their tribal minorities. In fact, they have not only done this but have also tried to exploit the grievances of tribal minorities in the developing countries to subvert democratic and nationalist loyalties and to promote the cause of violent revolution.

Since emotional integration with the rest of the country has been more consistently weak in North East Hill Areas (NEHA) than elsewhere in India, this condition needs urgent correction in the national interest, particularly in view of its strategic situation. The first steps in this direction would appear to be:

(a) Identification and definition of the socio-cultural and economic factors which seem to be responsible for the weakness in NEHA of emotional integration with the rest of India, and

(b) devise ways and means to facilitate the growth of such emotional integration.

A fruitful approach to questions of problem identification and resolution in NEHA has to be comprehensive and integrated. This approach has at least two important dimensions : (i) context, and (ii) coordination.

*(i) Ethnic and geo-political context*

Without losing sight of the national interests and appropriately defined goals, the problems of NEHA must be looked at inclusively in the following four ethnic and geo-political contexts:

(a) In the context of inter-community as well as intra-community relationships in North-Eastern India (Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, NEFA and Tripura).

(b) In the context of the geographical spread of the communities or tribes inhabiting that region, and the recent attempts at tribal solidarity and self-identification movements.

(c) In the context of South-East Asia with which several tribes and castes

in the north-eastern region of India have ethnic or historical relationships (e.g. the Khasi links with the Khmer-speaking people in south-east Asia or those of the Kuki with the Chins in Burma, and so on) and the current socio-political situation which is comparable to the situation in NEHA. The situation in Burma, Thailand or Cambodia may trigger off reactions in NEHA vice-versa.

(d) In the likely context of the big power using the socio-political situation in North-eastern India to further their own ends.

The foreign powers to have such interests in north-eastern India, have first of all to be established as a fact, and one purpose of research in NEHA should be exactly this. Beliefs about the interest in this region of some of the great powers, however, are widespread amongst the people of NEHA. These beliefs are given currency to and perpetuated by sections of tribal leadership who circulate articles published in foreign newspapers about NEHA. These are usually translated into the tribal languages to ensure wider circulation, and extensive quotations from foreign press reports are reproduced in vernacular newspapers and given interpretative twists to suit specific purposes. A recent example of this is the *Observer* article by Clayton (May 1967) which was translated soon after its appearance into several tribal languages and circulated in Nagaland. The influence of foreign press report needs to be investigated.

### (ii) *Coordinated approach*

In NEHA, much more than anywhere else, different problems cannot be treated separately for purposes of resolution. It is often forgotten that social, political, economic, educational, strategic and other problems are all inter-related, and the study or solution of problems in one field ought to take note of the total context. In other words, this means that the root cause of a problem, say a 'political' problem, may lie in a non-political area and a superficial solution which ignores the wider context might only exacerbate the problem or might generate problems in other and linked areas. This is often not realized and a partial or fragmentary approach to the solution of a problem is made with predictable, unhappy results. This seems to be the case at present in regard to problem resolution in NEHA. Coordination at different levels and between administrative, developmental welfare and academic agencies concerned with NEHA is absolutely essential.

One practical implication of this would be to have a single agency at the Centre for looking into problems in NEHA in all their ramifications so that the multi-dimensional implications of any solution may be examined thoroughly before it is finally adopted.

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# The Emerging Situation in Nagaland and some suggestions for a National Policy

M. ARAM

The situation in Nagaland has been changing rapidly. If we are to compare the situation as it was in 1964 with the situation as it is today in 1969 we can see that an enormous metamorphosis has taken place. I have been in Nagaland from the beginning of 1965. I have watched the situation continuously shifting and changing. Naga body-politic has unusual dynamism.

What are the dominant aspects of the new emerging situation in Nagaland:

## *(1) Growing love of peace and normalcy*

Nagaland passed through about ten years of continuous trouble from 1954 to 1964. The area was a disturbed region. There were operations by the Army on the one hand and guerrilla activities by the underground on the other. The public, particularly those in the villages, were the worst sufferers. The loss of life and destruction of property were considerable. The normal life of the people was disrupted and their progress retarded.

The ten years of violence did not solve the problem. Of course, in 1960, the Government of India decided to constitute the State of Nagaland which came into force in December, 1963 but the advent of statehood did not immediately terminate the disturbed condition. So, the public convention at Wokha held early in 1964 formed the Peace Mission which succeeded in bringing about a ceasefire between underground and the government in September 1964. The public welcomed with relief the coming of peace. From September 1964 onwards the cease-fire or suspension of operations has been continuously extended by short or long instalments and now we are in the sixth year of peace.

The public are immensely gratified at the continued peace and their love of peace has grown with the passage of time. Today the underground groups and the Governments—State and Central—fully appreciate the public desire for peace and normalcy. None of them would want to be the first party to break the peace. All realize that the violence of the past was futile and the violence of the future, if the present peace were to break down, will be far more terrible. This new-found devotion to peace and non-violence on the part



of the Naga people is the dominant aspect of the developing situation in Nagaland.

*(2) Growing desire for progress and development*

Time was when the Naga people wanted to live by themselves in a shell of isolation and viewed with hostility and suspicion anything coming from outside. But that attitude of isolationist withdrawal from the outer world is now a thing of the past. The Naga people today are reaching out for the benefits of modern life. Every village desires a line of communication with the outside world. Every Naga wants his children to be educated along modern lines and the educated Naga youth aspire for the various kinds of modern avocations. Since the desire for social progress is intense, the people are enthusiastically cooperating with the Government in its many programmes of development. Indeed a social revolution is taking place in Nagaland. Within a short span of time the traditional tribal society is transforming itself into a modern technologically mature agro-industrial society. All are agreed that the rate of social change in Nagaland is very great. It may be noted that the common people's desire for peace is directly linked with their desire for progress and development.

*(3) Growing consensus regarding the political problem*

It is true that the Naga political problem is yet to be finally solved. Many rounds of talks between the underground leaders and the Government of India during the period 1964 to 1967 did not yield results. From October 1967 onwards, there has been a stalemate. A section of the underground tried to develop liaison with China but the Naga public have repudiated its move since they saw in it danger to peace and Christian way of living. Now peace is more secure and the fear of the return of violence has receded.

There have been significant moves for the final settlement of the Naga question. The "Revolutionary" section of the underground headed by Kughatu Sukhai and Scato Swu and some "middle-ground" leaders like Shilu Ao have been taking initiatives for a final settlement with the Government of India. The Naga Nationalist Organisation (NNO), the ruling party, also has taken the initiative and convened overground-underground leaders' meetings. It is possible that in the near future some consensus would emerge.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the preponderant majority of the Naga public would accept a position within the Indian Union. The Nagas may desire some improvements in the present status. They may desire the enlargement of the present State boundaries to include the neighbouring Naga-inhabited areas. They would also wish the formation of a Naga Regiment, a separate Governor and a separate High Court. The transfer of responsibility for law and order to the State Government is another change

desired by all. The outlines of the final settlement are not yet clear but some of the items mentioned above are bound to come up. As and when a final settlement comes about, the situation in Nagaland will be completely normalized. The underground will come overground in entirety. Such a normalisation is something to be desired for by all of us.

#### *(4) Growing individualism and weakening of community spirit*

With the impact of modern life and culture, there is a strong trend for the Naga people to become more and more individualistic. The average Naga is more concerned about his individual advancement and welfare. Formerly, the Naga villages were well-knit units with strong social cohesion. Today there is a loosening of the community structure and the individual is more and more on his own. On the whole, this is a healthy development. To be a prisoner of the powerful collectivity of a clan or village was not so good. Today the individual Naga lives in a liberal atmosphere and he has the opportunity for free personality growth and greater self-expression. But the other side of the picture is that the old values of community solidarity and corporate action are disappearing. They have not completely disappeared. As a matter of fact they are still present in an abundant measure in many of the rural communities of Nagaland. There is no doubt, however, that the trend is towards an atomised society of the modern type. Our task is to so guide the social change that there will be a healthy balance between individual freedom and community cohesion.

#### *(5) Widening of socio-economic disparities*

As the Naga society emerges from the traditional tribal form and moves into the modern agro-industrial phase, we visibly see disparities developing between the different sections of the population and between the urban and the rural sectors. There is no doubt that during the recent years some have become very rich whereas the bulk of the population is still on the old standard of living. With the educated Nagas holding important administrative positions and other prestigious and remunerative jobs the gap is growing between the educated section and the uneducated section. Not only in respect of financial emoluments and physical facilities but in other respects also such as cultural standards and ways of living, disparities are unavoidable in a developing society but then as these disparities go beyond a certain limit, the social tensions are bound to arise. The various social and political ideologies have not yet made their entry into Nagaland. But the time is not far off when they will. It will be wise and farsighted to guide the course of economic growth and social development so that the new Naga society will have a reasonable measure of equality and integration even as the old Naga society used to have.

## CONCLUSION

Growing love of peace, growing desire for progress, growing consensus for political settlement, growing individualism and increasing social disparities, are some dominant aspects of the emerging situation in Nagaland. They, of course, do not constitute an exhaustive description.

Flowing from the above, we may formulate some suggestions for policy towards Nagaland. Nagaland has been, and is, a major national concern. "The Naga Problem", as it is commonly called, is an important item on the agenda of the Central Government, often demanding the personal attention of the Prime Minister. The Parliament too debates the Naga question often. To liberal public opinion in India, Nagaland has been a challenge. Since the problem is still unsolved and the final settlement is yet to be achieved, correct and imaginative national policy is of prime importance. The following may be the elements of such a policy:

(i) To continue the present peace policy and take further steps towards permanent ceasefire. The present practice is month-by-month extension. It may be considered whether a declaration of permanent peace can be made.

(ii) To consider with sympathy the suggestions and demands that may emerge from a consensus of Naga public opinion regarding the political problem. As and when all sections of Naga public including the former rebel groups accept the Indian Union as the larger framework within which they can fashion their own political destiny, the Government of India should respond appropriate accede to reasonable demands such as merger of neighbouring Naga areas, formation of Naga Regiment, transfer of law and order to the State Government, separate Governor and High Court, etc. Honourable rehabilitation of former underground personnel is also important.

(iii) To adopt a liberal policy of grants and subsidies for the development of Nagaland. This is followed even now.

(iv) Even more important, to formulate a new policy of development so that benefits may be evenly distributed among the population and old values of the Naga life may be synthesized with new values of modern culture. A commission of experts must be asked to help in this task. They will bring a comprehensive approach to bear upon the subject. A narrow economic approach or bureaucratic approach must give place to a new enlightened policy of development.

# Tribes on the North-Western Border of India (Western Himalayas)

D.N. DHIR

## INTRODUCTORY

In the north-western part of India, the Western Himalayas consist of the state of Jammu & Kashmir and the Union Territory of Himachal Pradesh. Tribes, scheduled as such, are only found in Himachal Pradesh, specifically in the districts of Kinnaur, Lahaul & Spiti and Chamba (Bharmaur and Pangi tehsils). In the State of Jammu & Kashmir, Gujjars and Bakarwals constitute the nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes, who merit similar consideration, though they are not scheduled as tribes.

It is proposed to confine this paper to the aforementioned category of people. Particular cognizance needs being taken of the inhabitants of the two districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti, which are situated on the international border with China.

These tribes in Western Himalayas live in environments and surroundings which are entirely different from ours. A variety of physical strains impinge upon their lives and mould them accordingly. The awe-inspiring mountains surround them and create in them the understandable element of mysticism and fatalism. The steep terrain makes the communications extremely difficult, in addition to making cultivable land scarce. During peak winter life comes almost to a standstill for those who stay at home. Bulk of them used to migrate and still migrate to lower ranges.

Geographic location on the international border has added an element of insecurity into their lives and property currently, after they have lived in peace and calm for centuries in the grandeur and tranquillity of the Himalayas.

The aim of this paper is to bring out succinctly the historic facts and the present circumstances of these tribes, the efforts so far made for the realization of inspirations of these people who inhabit one of the highest regions in the world and to present the problems which presently exercise one's mind—problems that have arisen from our efforts in recent times on advancement and development of these people and their areas.

Primarily the appreciation is based upon the scribe's knowledge and



experience gained on the subject in dealing with it on the desk in office and during extensive tours of these areas, in connection with government assignments, in one capacity or the other for the last over a decade generally and for the past year and a half particularly.

The brief data presented in this paper has been drawn from 1961 Census Reports, Volume No. I, Part I-A; Census Monograph, Volume XX, Part V-B, entitled "Report on the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes" by William H. Newell, and the unpublished "Socio-Economic Survey of Lahaul & Spiti" (conducted by the Economic and Statistical Organisation, Punjab, in 1964) and Socio-Economic Survey of Gujjars and Bakarwals conducted by the Directorate of Welfare, Government of India (Northern Zone) in 1969.

#### GENERAL PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

Situated on the Himalayan Range, in these areas the highest altitude (7026 metres) is found in Lahaul & Spiti, and a little below the next highest altitude (6474 metres) is found in Kinnaur.

The main rivers in the region are Ravi in Chamba, Chandrabhaga (termed as Chenab on later course) in Lahaul and Sutlej in Spiti and Kinnaur. Geological features of various areas in the mountainous topography as exhibited in the various types of rocks are as follows:

Chamba	Slate, Limestone and Phyllite
Kinnaur	Muroo beds and triassic and premien rock
Lahaul & Spiti	Jurassic rocks (Limestone and Shales)

The rainfall is inadequate. It is particularly scanty in Lahaul & Spiti.

#### PEOPLE, POPULATION AND NUMBER OF TRIBES

The area, population and number of villages, blockwise are given in the following table:

	Area (sq. miles)	Population	No. of villages
<i>Chamba</i>			
Bharmaur	518	25,625	106
Pangi	900	11,678	90
<i>Lahaul &amp; Spiti</i>			
Lahaul	1,779	15,177	172
Spiti	2,931	5,276	70
<i>Kinnaur</i>			
Nichor	448	12,120	21
Kalpa	668	15,162	24
Pooh	1,443	13,248	32

The population figures in Lahaul & Spiti should be deducted by 3,000 to 3,500 which consisted of migratory labour working in Lahaul & Spiti at the time of Census in 1961. All of this labour consisted of Tibetan refugees, Nepali Gorkhas and Kashmiri Muslims. In Kinnaur, Buddhist population consisted of 3,569, which number in Lahaul & Spiti was 9,503. With the minor sprinkling of Sikhs, the others in both these districts and in the two sub-tees of Chamba district mentioned above, consisted of Hindus.

In Western Himalayas as a whole no language is in a dominant position. By and large the predominant language is unspecified Pahari, but all the dialects covered by it do not have a consensus of oneness. The local dialect is Chameli in Chamba, Kinnauri in Kinnaur and Lahauli in Lahaul & Spiti. Hindi, or in fact composite group of Hindi, Punjabi, Pahari and Hindustani is widely understood in the entire area. In Lahaul & Spiti, Bodhi (Tibetan) dialect and Urdu are also in vogue. The latter had been due to Lahaul lying on the trade route to Central Asia.

The percentage of literacy in Chamba, Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti has been 18, 15 and 18 respectively. This was recorded in 1961 Census which was as result of the then education drive in these land-blocked areas. The people have taken to education for the newness of it and for their own benefit.

In Chamba district the scheduled tribes and Gaddis (50,187), Gujjars (4,836) and Pangwals (7,719) and in Lahaul & Spiti the predominant tribe is Bodhor Bhot (12,005) followed by Swanglas (2,114). In Kinnaur all are known as Kinnars, which is a scheduled tribe.

At least one-third of the population of Kinnaur consists of scheduled castes Kohlis, Lohars and Badhi, but for purposes of outside world all residents of Kinnaur are Kinnars and hence tribes. These castes are in comparison backward to the tribes in Kinnaur. Similarly in Lahaul & Spiti also there are three categories of scheduled castes who, on the contrary are not tribes and are now proposed to be covered in the definition of scheduled tribes.

Due to the prevalence of polyandry, the rate of growth in Lahaul & Spiti has had an automatic check. In Kinnaur also polyandry used to be practised in the past and the crude productive index has kept low. In Lahaul & Spiti the peculiar custom of primo-geniture was practised where by the eldest male child in the family inherited the properties; the other male and female children went to the monasteries as monks and nuns. However, this has been a matter of yesterday.

In these areas, in the matter of sex ratio, males outnumber females.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE TRIBES

##### *Gaddis*

This well-known tribe inhabits predominantly the existing Bharmaur sub-

tehsil of Chamba district and the kinsmen are found along the foothills of neighbouring Kangra district. They reside on high hills where winter is severe. That makes most of the inhabitants to migrate to low altitudes in winter. During summer they go to higher pastures along with their flocks of sheep. Those who stay back all the 12 months of the year look after small land holdings.

Gaddis are entirely Hindus, both in their religion and in their social organization. By their own traditions they come from the Indian plains driven by Muslims persecution and have adjusted themselves to very different ecological situation from the plains. Their caste system modified by their hard environments throws a great deal of light on the fundamental nature of Indian castes. "Their distinctiveness within the Hindu tradition rests on four factors; their history which has been continuous for at least 1,000 years, their political system and privileged position in the wider Chamba State which has given them a high degree of self-government, the special position of the Raja as representative and owner of the national interest in land and their strong connection with the gods, especially Shivji who resides on a mountain within Gaddiland and plays an active part in the ritual and rules of the social system. History, politics, land and religion all form different facets of their national character."

Gaddis are essentially a semi-agricultural and semi-pastoral lot. Spinning, weaving and blacksmithy are the minor trades adopted in the rural areas by the Gaddis.

Well-built and healthy, the Gaddis have a distinct dress. Men wear a knee-long woollen coat and move about bare-legged. The women have an ankle-long skirt. Both tie their waistes with long black woollen ropes which, in time of need are used for tying the herd or for rock climbing.

### *Kinnars*

The name of the district (formerly Chini sub-tehsil of Rampur Bushahr, in turn part of Mahasu district) has been derived from the inhabitants known locally as Kinnars, who find a place in Hindu mythology. The area abounds in snow-clad mountains such as Kailash and Khaskar which have sacred character. The inhabitants can give age old stories to the visitor in their midst.

The people are primarily agriculturists and their subsidiary occupations are weaving, spinning, silversmithy, wood-carving (carpentry) and artistic metalware manufacturing.

Each village has a devta. There are a number of Buddhist monasteries in the area. Kinnaur has been a nestling place of Hinduism and Buddhism existing side by side. Religious fairs are numerous where men and women turn out in their best attires and drink and dance. These folk dances are performed in a graceful style. The people have great love of flowers and make use of them as ornaments, particularly on fairs.

### *Lahaulis and Spitians*

Prior to the creation of the district in July, 1960, it formed a part of Kulu sub-division of Kangra district of erstwhile Punjab. The two sub-divisions, viz. Lahaul and Spiti stand entirely apart in terms of physical and geographical characteristics, economic, social and cultural life patterns. The district is surrounded by Ladakh on the north, Chamba on the west, Bara Banghal and Kulu on the south and Rampur Bushahr on the east.

The main entrance to Lahaul is through the Rohtang Pass at a height of 13,400 feet and to Spiti through the Kunzum Pass at a height of 15,500 feet. Spiti also lies north of Kinnaur district from where communications are alive throughout the year. During peak winter a number of Lahaulis migrate to Rampur Bushahr, Kulu and Manali for feeding their males and earning their living.

Lahaul is entirely cut off from the outside world during six winter months. The average altitude of inhabitation is about 10,000 to 12,000 feet above the sea level. The people of Lahaul are intelligent and commercial-minded because of their age old trade with Tibet. The people of Spiti, on the other hand, are more akin in physical appearance to the Tibetans, the men wearing pigtails and having no beard. Their mainstay of economy is agricultural labour, pony transport, government and private service and customary services like blacksmithy and carpentry, etc.

There are a number of Buddhist monasteries, particularly in Spiti Valley. A visit to them now testifies that they flourished extremely well in the past. The people have their annual fairs round these monasteries and other devta temples and they turn out in their best on such festive occasions.

Spitians are hardy and well-built, though incidence of disease, particularly T.B. and V.D. is appreciable in these valleys.

### *Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir*

Though not scheduled as tribes, this is the most important category of pastoral class. The Gujjars and Bakarwals of Jammu & Kashmir constitute the nomadic and semi-nomadic peculation and on a safe assessment would constitute 10% of the total population (about 3.5 lakhs). Their backwardness is all-round, but it is particularly more in scanty educational advancement and unhealthy living conditions. Economically some of them may be considered as fairly well-off in comparison with to other backward communities; at least this conclusion is reached by having a look at them in political, administrative and urban hierarchy in the State, where some of them have good positions.

The origin of Gujjars has continued to be a subject of deep study and of irreconcilable controversy so far. Quite a few towns, districts and even a state



in the country have derived their names from this word, thus showing some historical link between this section of the people and the places in the process of settlement in the country. It is, however, a settled fact that Gujjars migrated into India, stretching over different periods, since the sixth century. They came from Central Asia from where communication with India was a regular feature on well-established trade routes. In the State of Jammu & Kashmir they concentrated in Poonch, Rajauri and Doda districts and across Bannihal in Kashmir Valley on the foothills of Anantnag and Baramulla districts.

Climatic conditions, particularly during summer, which help in growth and yield of their milch cattle, goat and sheep, draws them towards higher hills and one finds these Gujjars also spread over to Mandi and Kangra districts of Himachal Pradesh. Essentially a pastoral class, however, some of them possess agricultural land also, but these Gujjars have no distinction as cultivators. They possess a common speech which is derived from Hindi dialect. Socially their customs are by and large those of the other Muslims in the vicinity among whom they live. Their love for cattle is immense and it has been recorded that their grief at the demise of a buffalo has been as much as on the death of a near and dear one.

The Gujjars of Kashmir are tall and gaunt with rather narrow forehead and chin. They all walk fast and cover long distances. In the state they are masters of uninhabited routes and forest paths since they have to go to higher pastures and valleys. Majority of the population has been found to be in the age group of 31 to 59. Even old amongst this category keep good health because of their outdoor and active life. In matters of literacy their percentage is deplorably low. Economically their mainstay is cattle wealth, though the income is supplemented by produce from land and employment as labour.

#### EXTENT OF DEVELOPMENT IN RECENT TIMES

All the categories of backward classes mentioned above, came for special care by the Central and State Governments concerned. A variety of measures were initiated and implemented to ameliorate their socio-economic conditions, educational advancement and economic upliftment. Improvements were also sought to be made in their health and living conditions. The objective was to break through the age-old inaccessibility, ignorance and poverty and bring this section of the society at par with others. Special schemes were fitted into the State and Central Plans of the Department of Social Welfare. Educational concessions consisted of freeships and award of stipends and scholarships; improvement in the living conditions was sought to be recorded by way of subsidizing house-construction activities; dispensaries and hospitals were opened in the interior; network of primary, middle and high schools was established; each beneficent department of the State Government went in its

own way to increase its activities in the areas for the ultimate benefit of the inhabitants.

Seven Development Blocks were opened which were later brought under the structure of Tribal Development Blocks and this covered the entire tribal population in Himachal Pradesh. The main objective of the Tribal Development Blocks is to develop minor communications, irrigation facilities, reclamation of waste land, development of agriculture, animal husbandry, cottage industries and the like. An amount of Rs. 15 lakhs per block is the allocation for expenditure in three stages stretching to 15 years. Social education and adult literacy are other important aspects of the assignments with the development block.

For Gujjars and Bakarwals in Jammu & Kashmir, special schemes have been conceived in the recent years. In addition to the aforementioned schemes aimed at ameliorating the conditions of backward classes, it was attempted to create cooperatives for ousting middlemanship. Special allocations were made for construction of the forest paths and travellers' inns for the nomads and seminomads when they frequented high pastures.

For opening out the relatively inaccessible valleys, particularly the two border districts of Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur, Border Roads Organisation of the Government of India came into the act in a big way. A black top motorable road with minor ingredients takes one from Simla to Shivkula on the border of Tibet on Hindustan-Tibet Road in a matter of a day or two.

Similarly, one can motor upon the high altitude passes, namely, Rohtang and Baralacha to reach Leh (Ladakh) from Kulu-Manali in a matter of a day or two. Formerly one would take anything between 10 to 15 days on either journey. Similarly, public transport now plies over 15,000 feet high Kunzum Pass, connecting Keylong with Kaza and thence to Kaurik on the Tibetan border during summer.

The age-old inaccessibility has now melted away. The huge construction programme of roads, government buildings and rest houses have brought in their wake employment potential for the local inhabitants of Kinnaur and Lahaul & Spiti.

The administration of the two border districts of Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur is the special responsibility of the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, who not only finance the development plans but also foot the administration bills. The creation of full-fledged administrative units of district level has meant a firm grip on the sensitive border area which in recent years has become alive to the wily designs of an unholy neighbour. Concluding, except for changing the topography, which is humanly impossible, the government have done all that was practicable to make the lives of the people happier and healthier. The challenge still stares in the face and the efforts still continue.

## SOME PROBLEMS

These tribes, particularly the Gaddis of Bharmaur, Thakars (Bodhs or Shwanglas) of Lahaul and Negis (Kinnars) of Kinnaur are essentially different from the tribes we know of in other parts of the country. Unlike the rest, they are not colourful. Economically they are definitely better off than the tribes in the rest of the country. In fact the Lahaulis are amongst the best dressed in the whole of Himachal Pradesh. Their clothes and jewellery are costly. Both Lahaulis and Kinnars are intelligent and commercial minded; they have had to deal in trade and commerce for centuries in markets across the border in Tibet and Central Asia.

The predominant fact which apparently weighed with the Union of India to declare them as tribes was the consideration that they lived in comparative inaccessibility for centuries. The inhospitable climatic conditions under which they grew and worked apparently clinched the issues. Since the government could so take care of them in a better way in ameliorating their social, educational and allied conditions, they were scheduled as tribes.

Social, or more appropriately community life in these Himalayan abodes used to revolve round village gods (*devtas*) and Buddhist monasteries. There were religious fairs all the year round from place to place. People turned out in their best attires and partook in feasting for days together. They drank, sang and danced. In these folk songs and dances one can peep into their simple faith. They believe in mysticism and fatalism. Bereft of complications of life and complexities of modernism, they cloaked their grief in religion and learned to live the hard life they were destined for with a cheer. The existence of village gods and Buddhist monasteries provided the nuclei around which this community life thrived. The Karding monastery near Keylong (Lahaul) and the Buddhist monastery at Sangam (Kinnaur) testify that at one time these huge buildings gave asylum to numerous monks and nuns, who spread the message of Lord Buddha around. In Lahaul, and particularly in Spiti, the existence of these Buddhist monasteries was an essential supplementary institution to cater to all the children of a family, except for the eldest male member who alone married and inherited the ancestral property.

Then came the roads and communications with the outside world. The locals, who earlier only descended from the high hills to lower levels during peak winter (to Kulu and Manali in case of Lahaul and to Rampur Bushahr in case of Spiti and Kinnaur) came into contact with the outsiders. There was intermixing of the workers from the plains; their prosperity and custom interacted upon the simplicity and fatalism of the inhabitants of the Himalayas. New avenues for education have been thrown open by establishment of a network of schools in these hills. Education bred aspirations, and unspecified

aspirations will, of course, breed unrest. For a good length of time the government continued to be the single biggest employer and with reservation in jobs these tribal boys and girls found berths at various levels in government departments. The saturation point is fast arriving. This has already been reached in Lahaul and shortly the same circumstances may appear in Kinnaur. There was a time when jobs ran after these tribals, but the picture is fast changing and the sight of educated unemployed in the tribes is no longer rare. In fact one could find them now in dozens in Keylong.

#### EXISTENCE OF RELIGIOUS VACUUM

Resultantly, with the above changing circumstances, both in the community by breaking through the barriers of inaccessibility, and in the individual by breaking through this age-old ignorance, loss of faith has occurred. The first observation which strikes a visitor to these areas today is the state of decay and disuse to which these Buddhist monasteries and village temples have fallen. This loss of faith in the village institution around which the community life revolved has resulted in the creation of what may be called a religious vacuum in these areas, particularly in Lahaul & Spiti and Kinnaur. The new educated generation has little use of these temples and monasteries. They have little to rejoice in community singing and dancing. In short they have lost the old meeting ground without having cared to create a new one.

In such a state of religious vacuum two dangers arise; first, that of invasion of these areas in the inhabitants' thought process by communism from across the border, and/or secondly, invasion by missionaries, with huge resources from abroad, belonging to faiths other than the faith professed by these simple folk. Either or both of these prospects are disturbing. They threaten to change the existing social pattern and the change does not promise to be for betterment.

#### RISING UNEMPLOYMENT

The rising unemployment amongst the educated youth is another disturbing prospect to engage one's immediate attention. The government has gone in, and is still pursuing, a big programme of experimentation for bringing the local soil to a high degree of productivity by raising a variety of commercial and exclusive crops which could be remunerative; but that pursuit, by itself, does not take an educated youth back to tilling the land. As it is, it is a sad fact that the spread of education ingenua to the white-collar jobs and not to working with their hands in professions and trades afforded locally in a more intelligent way. The employment potential is decreasing as development is being recorded in various aspects in the lives of these people, but the number of educated youth is on the increase. Where do we go from here? That taxes one's foresight.



## NATIONAL INTEGRATION

Last, but by no means the least, is the still unsolved question of integrating these people into the bigger social and national order of the country. These areas had been administered under local monarchy for centuries and only recently they have been brought under the direct Indian administration with all its laws and regulations. The transfer of administration has worked hard in some aspects here and there, and with experience, adjustments have been afforded both by the administration as also by the inhabitants. The people have come to think of a "Government" seated at Simla or New Delhi, looking at the vast funds that have flowed for construction of roads and buildings and development in agriculture and horticulture. But that has not been enough.

How far can these people rise during emergency is anybody's guess. The people still feel isolated and have their own ideas of individuals. Their dealings with the local administration have not so far produced unmitigated praise for the latter. They are bound to assess every situation in their own judgment, which may not be always welcome to the nation as a whole.

## THE PROBLEMS

In nutshell, therefore, three problems arise amongst the tribals in these border areas of Western Himalayas which still go abegging for a solution, viz.

- (i) Need to fill up the religious vacuum created by the disuse of village temples and Buddhist monasteries;
- (ii) Need to arrest the rising unemployment amongst the educated that has been brought forth by the spread of education; and
- (iii) Need to find out ways to create a solid feeling of nationalism amongst these tribes.

A stage has come to go over afresh on our activities for improving the lot of these tribals in Western Himalayas and to finally answer the oft-asked question: Where do we go from here?

# The Tribal Situation in Himachal Pradesh: Some Socio-Economic Considerations

T.S. NEGI

## DEFINITION

What is a Tribe? The dictionary meaning of the word stressed its two connotations of (i) groupism or community-fellowship; and (ii) distinctiveness which may include primitiveness. For the purpose of this paper, Tribe means a 'Scheduled Tribe' as declared by the President of India and retained as such, by the Parliament, under Article 342 of the Constitution.

Backwardness, economic as well as social, particularly the first, and aloofness have, in my view, been important among the factors in determining a tribe.

## THE LIST

The present list of Scheduled Tribes in Himachal Pradesh was the result of on-the-spot studies of the tribes by eminent social workers and experts in the line, in consultation with the local administrative authorities. This list bears the following tribes:

1. Kinnora (Kinnaura, Kanaura).
2. Gaddi
3. Gujjar
4. Jad
5. Lamba
6. Khampa
7. Lahaula
8. Pangwala
9. Swangia
10. Bhot or Bodh.

Districtwise total population and the population of the scheduled tribes is as follows:

<i>District</i>	<i>Total population</i>	<i>Scheduled Tribes</i>
Chamba	2,19,158	67,068
Mandi	3,84,259	5,044
Bilaspur	1,58,806	4,213
Kinnaur	40,980	25,667
Sirma	1,97,551	2,830
Mahasu	3,58,969	3,382
Simla	1,85,194	—
Kangra	1,24,202	—
Kulu	1,52,925	—
Lahaul & Spiti	20,453	17,530
	28,42,497	1,25,734

Source: Census of India, 1961.

Tribe-wise population figures are not readily available. Nevertheless, it can be said that the tribe known as Kinnaura (Synonyms: Kanaura, Kinnera) is the largest single Scheduled Tribe throughout Himachal Pradesh. According to the last Census, the population of this tribe was returned as 25,667. Out of the total population of 40,980 registered at the last Census in the Kinnaur district, 11,133 persons have been wrongly returned at census as belonging to Scheduled Castes. The actual position is that the entire permanent population within the districts at the time of enumeration in either service or business or otherwise and partly as these categorized (again erroneously) as belonging to some non-scheduled caste instead of being simply counted among the Scheduled Tribe. A good number of the permanent residents of the district may well be taken to have got enumerated elsewhere in the respective places in which they happened at that time to be living for one reason or the other. Moreover, there are some Kinnauras domiciled outside the district. All counted, the gross Kinnaura population in Himachal Pradesh would not be less than 41,000.

The description of 11,133 persons as members of scheduled Castes is erroneous. The error must have arisen from the wrong questioning by the census enumerators in the field. The correct question would be, "Are you or are you not a Kinnaura?" The reason is that the designation of the tribe in the Schedule is Kinnaura. And to such a question, the answer from everyone of those 11,133, who have been, categorized among the Scheduled Castes, would have been "I am a Kinnaura". As far as I have gathered from random questionings of the people here and there after the last census, the enumerators, in most of the cases, instead, put the question, "What is your caste?" On top of this, in some cases they reeled off caste names. In answer the questioned persons, in many cases, gave some caste name or the other. In the majority of cases the caste named in the reply was the one recorded, in respect of the family to which the questioned person belonged, in the revenue records.

Here, a few words of explanation may be said about these caste entries in the records.

In Kinnaur the aggregate and collective name of the tribe is Kinner/Kinnaura/Kanaura. The official records, at one stage showed the descriptions of Rajput and Koli also. There has never been a Brahmin over in the official records pertaining to Kinnaur. Now, after Independence, caste entries have been dropped all over the country.

Originally there was the Kinnaura tribe, reputed, by legendary belief as well as by some historical evidence and deduction, to be the descendant of the Kinners Tribe of Hindu Mythology. As tribal society grew older, a certain measure of division of labour developed and those who followed such professions as shoe-making came to be distinguished from the others. Originally and indigenously there were only two terms, viz. the Khashia and the Chamang. Nobody knew such terms as Rajput and Koli. When, with the advance of modernized administration, government functionaries, habitually given by training elsewhere to search for certain castes, arrived from outside, with pre-conceived notions of categories and castes learnt from different kinds of societies outside Kinnaur, they equated Khashia with such terms as Kanet/Rajput and Chamang as Koli. Whatever the terminology, the fundamental and more important feature is that Khashia or Chamang, Rajput or Koli, both are Kinners/Kinnauras/Kanauras and both have a common overall similarity and identity in social patterns, in dress and other modes of living, in custom, and in faiths, beliefs, superstitions, worship, folklore, traditions, etc. and this common bond is so strong that both fit completely into the same tribal picture entitled Kinner/Kinnaura/Kanaura. If, at the Census, the simple question were whether or not he was a Kinnaura, then Khashia and Chamang both would promptly and naturally answer that each one was a Kinnaura. Now the Chamang section, as a whole, does not follow the profession of shoe-making and the trend is for youngmen belonging to both sections, Chamang as well as Khashia, to receive training in modernized shoemaking and other leather work in government training centres.

When iron came into the economy of the tribe, those who took to this profession came to be known as "Domang" (equated by the Government functionaries with the Scheduled Caste, Lohar), and with the arrival of the sewing machine those who took to tailoring for a living came to be called "Suin". I have mentioned this to show how the social plant, whether tribal or non-tribal, tends to branch off as it develops. What matters for basic purposes is the continuing common bond that ties all into the single tribal bundle. These days tailoring is being taken as a profession by individuals irrespective of whether they are Khashias or Chamangs and that goes also for training being received by youngmen in blacksmithy at government training centres.

The Report (Volume I) of the Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission discloses similar developments among the Gonds (the largest tribal group in India). There is therefore no hard and fast standard official



definition of what is and what is not a tribe. Any local community, that has, for one reason or another, remained economically and socially backward and socially and politically distinct, to such an extent that special treatment has been found necessary to enable the community to come out of the backwaters and join the main current, has been treated and scheduled by the government as a tribe. And so long as this overall common tribal stamp continues, the community belongs to the Schedule and remains a Scheduled Tribe.

In the Pangl Tehsil and the Brahmour Sub-Tehsil of the Chamba District, there occur families once recorded in the official documents as Brahmins, and, in the case of Brahmaur, as Khatris too; and besides these caste descriptions and the general caste classification of Rajput, there are some households classed as belonging to some other castes, including a few of what are commonly called as the Scheduled Castes.

In the Lahaul-Spiti district too, the records once probably showed such caste names as Kanet, Rajput, Brahmin, Chan, etc. Whatever the origin of these caste descriptions, the fundamental and the more important circumstance is that, in the overall picture of general economy, mode of living, custom, social patterns, faiths, beliefs and worship, all fit into a similarity and an identity so strong that all sections answer to the common tribal designation, be it Kinnaura or Gaddi or Pangwala or Lahaula or Swangia or Bodh or Khampa or Jab or Lamba.

The Gujjars are a Mohammedan tribe, essentially nomadic. They are found in all districts of Himachal Pradesh except Kinnaur and Spiti and Lahaul. Focal Interest : I presume the focal interest at this Seminar is the objective study of the present condition. This study may broadly be classified into three categories, namely, economic, social and political.

#### THE ECONOMIC ASPECT

The Gujjar, nomadic, as mentioned above, has, down the generations, led a pastoral life, depending almost entirely upon his herd of buffaloes for a living and for all necessaries of life. In his own style, he is a great dairyman. Partly for his own sake and partly for the sake of soil conservation (the buffalo is one of the heaviest causes of soil erosion), the government has been spending considerable money on efforts to settle the Gujjar to fixed colonies. But all this endeavour to cure the Gujjar of his age-old nomadic nature has so far failed. However, in stray cases, Gujjars have acquired landed properties and built permanent houses. In the majority of even such cases, the nomadic feature has not totally disappeared.

With higher prices for milk and milk products and for the livestock that the Gujjar would sell and with improved means of communication, there has been appreciable betterment in the Gujjar's economy. His real economic

salvation still lies in a more settled and less nomadic mode of life near urban and, therefore, better markets and away from the rural scenes where he is increasingly coming into clash with the villager who has a vested interest in the grazing grounds.

### *Khampa*

Another traditionally nomadic tribe, the Khampa's ancient occupation has been petty in some cases substantial business in various commodities. He used to wander from place to place in India and in Tibet, from India to Tibet and vice-versa, hawking his merchandise and accompanied by his beasts of burden, mostly ponies. With the disruption of access to Tibet after the Chinese occupation there and with the advent of vehicular traffic he has been progressively driven to settled life. The majority of this tribe would seem to have taken to one mode or the other of settled occupation. With a little aid here and there most of the rest should follow suit with lasting benefit themselves. A small minority, the tribe will need much greater assistance to rehabilitate itself owing to its indigence.

### THE OTHER TRIBES

Broadly speaking, the other tribes have been non-nomadic. Agriculture and animal husbandry have been their mainstay, traditionally. Moreover, families in Kinnaur and Lahaul had, over the generations, built up profitable commercial ties with Tibet, but all that has been shattered by the Communist domination of Tibet, causing a severe setback to the economy of not only these trading families but also, more or less, to that of so many other families indirectly benefited by that trade.

Originally, the economy was self-contained and of a low standard. The lands yielded cereals, largely coarse and partially fine. The family flocks and herds supplied milk and milk products, meat, wool and goat hair. The domestic beehives provided honey. The sheep, the goats, the bullocks, the donkeys and the ponies of the household would all be pressed into service as beasts of burden; and barter and wages in kind would fetch the other necessities and services. Originally even taxes were paid in kind. The cash *nekus* appeared after a period and has ever since been growing progressively. Trade, especially with Tibet, also went on expanding. Sources of cash income (other than non-barter commerce) such as salaried service, wages for labour, contracts, appeared on the scene. With these developments, the economy grew higher in standard but less stable and more dependent extraneously. This process has continued during the last many years and it has been greatly accelerated after Independence by the consciously planned development programmes that the nation has been chalking out and

executing ever since.

Agriculture has caught the cash crop touch, in this respect Lahaul has been the leader among the tribal homelands. Thanks to some Missionary examples, the Lahaul people took to *kuth* cultivation as long ago as 1936-37 and, for many years, this herb was a great money-spinner that gave a big boost, comparatively, to the agricultural economy there, while the other tribal homelands, i.e. Kinnaur, Spiti, Brahmaur and Pangl, still clung to the subsistence pattern of cereals. Though, with the Communist overrunning of China, the principle market for *kuth*, this cash crop has dwindled much in its financial potential, yet something or the other has since been seized upon by the Lahaul people as a means to earn cash and, on the whole, they have maintained the economic lead over the other tribal areas.

Communications, anywhere in the world and in hilly terrain, in particular, are the harbingers of economic prosperity. In this respect Kinnaur has, so far, benefited the most among all the tribal areas of Himachal Pradesh. Next comes Lahaul; then Brahmaur and, last of all, Spiti and Pangl, in that order. For the sake of a correct perspective, two important things must be mentioned here. The first is that most of the road-building activity in Kinnaur has been forced by defence needs of the country as a whole. The second is the comparative neglect of areas not important strategically. If Lahaul is now the next major beneficiary of the road-building programmes, the reason is its defence importance next to Kinnaur. If Brahmaur, Spiti and Pangl are still behind Lahaul, the reason is the relevant small significance of these areas for strategic purposes. Even within the same district Kinnaur, the growth of roads has followed the lines and directions of defence preparations to the comparative neglect of the other parts. Along the N.H. 22 one may cover nearly two hundred miles in a day, while, just opposite, along the other bank of the same Sutlej, or the same tributary of the Sutlej, one may still take nearly a fortnight to cover the same distance. I had recently to trek up and down on foot for three days to cover a distance on the other bank which I would have travelled in less than three hours on the N.H. bank. The same situation would obtain in Lahaul. The moral is, first, that it would be false to claim, as some politicians do claim, that the tribals have received all this benefit of roads just because they are Scheduled Tribes. Secondly, that it would be misleading to presume, as some people do seem hastily to presume, that, just because there is this trunk road or that trunk road or sub-trunk road here or there, the whole area known as Kinnaur or Lahaul stands served with a network of roads.

Road work, in the main, and other constructional work (for defence needs or for purely developmental purposes) next thereto, and the induction of large floating populations requiring rented accommodation and other necessities, went on, for some years, until about three years ago, in the Kinnaur district, on such a large scale and with such suddenness that the resulting burst of a boom in wage-earning and other cash incomes left over the headaches of an

'upset economy'. Some politicians cunningly or ignorantly talk loudly of having charges, for the better, the very face of the economic life of Kinnaur, by virtue merely of this temporary boom. It is a very misleading talk. The correct picture is that what Kinnaur has tasted is just a passing phase of an unprecedented upsurge of cash income in all its history so far. For a brief period, Kinnaur must have, during these boom years left behind even Lahaul in the race for cash money. The recession resulting from the very much shrunken spending programmes of the government, mainly in consequence of the straits of Plain Finances, has already left numerous families high and dry, in a financial quandary. Those in government or outside, do not know this nature of the new economy in Kinnaur. Lasting assets like orchards and other forms of cash crop farming, deeply rooted commercial enterprises, durably based industries, dependably long living channels of rent-earning and the higher grades of permanent employment in government and private services, have just touched the fringe yet. In terms of lasting assets, probably Lahaul still holds the top position, though even there the present position leaves much to be desired. Brahmaur, Pangl and Spiti stand, in that descending order, after Kinnaur with Lahaul in the lead, in the matter of substantial present assets and solid bases for a self-generating future economy.

Animal husbandary, in which Brahmaur is, perhaps, the leader, with Kinnaur as the runner up and Lahaul, Pangl and Spiti bringing up the rear in that lagging order, would be quite lucrative, if the increasing hardships and falling resources pertaining to feeding ways and means were not there. As it is, the claims of sylviculture for commercial and industrial ends, the interests of soil conservation and rival land use openings have all combined, and sheer onesidedness in outlook, and possibly even political ulterior motives, on the part of some in positions of authority, have conspired with that combination, to mount an increasing pressure on the livestock breeders and graziers, that tends to push them out of one feeding avenue of livestock after another. The livestock breeders and graziers have been driven to such desperation that the whole profession of animal husbandry stands threatened with disintegration. One beholds with unmixed surprise, the spectacle of programmes and farms of the government for the improvement of the breeds of livestock, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the contradictory attitude of neglect or aggressive apathy or even hostility, on the part of some persons in governmental authority, towards the problem of feeding resources. The National Forest Policy of India treats animal husbandry and, therefore, the grazing problem, as one of the paramount important issues and requires positive action to be taken to provide progressively increasing grazing. Unfortunately for the livestock breeders and graziers (mostly people belonging to scheduled tribes and border areas), for the nation as a whole and for themselves, there are those in authority here who fail or refuse to see that animal husbandry and its problems of feeding are not only the headaches of the livestock breeder but



also the challenges and problems facing the nation and its governments.

A highly placed politician is reported to have told a high ranking body some days ago here in Simla, that, in Kinnaur, jobs were running after candidates. This would unhesitatingly call the howler of the year, so far, in complacency born of misplaced and outdated contact with realities. There indeed was a brief period of a year or two, when an adequately educated Kinnaura did get a job with reasonable ease; but that was a number of years ago. Today, and, in fact, for the past many years, unemployment has been mounting in Kinnaur as in the other tribal areas of Lahaul, Spiti, Brahmaur and Pangt. Today in all the tribal area, especially Kinnaur, Lahaul and Brahmaur, candidates are chasing the wild goose of jobs.

Since January 1959, a reservation of 5% has been in force in favour of the Scheduled Tribes under Article 335 of the Constitution. On January

Classification of posts/services	Total no. of posts on 11.1.66	Filled by Sch. tribes) No.	Percentage
<i>Permanent</i>			
Class I	108	2	1.99
Class II	454	4	0.09
Class III	11,932	136	1.1
Class IV (excluding sweepers)	3,784	119	3.2
Class IV (sweepers)	249	—	—
<i>Temporary</i>			
Class I	108	2	1.99
Class II	454	4	0.09
Class III	11,932	136	1.1
Class IV (excluding sweepers)	3,784	119	3.2
Class IV (sweepers)	249	—	—

And the information, so far available as on January 1967, gives the following figures:

<i>Permanent</i>			
Class I	33	2	6.6
Class II	148	5	3.4
Class III	9,485	205	2.02
Class IV (other than sweepers)	2,258	49	2.2
Class IV (sweepers)	58	1	1.7

Classification of posts/services	Total no of posts on 11.1.66	Filled by Sch. tribes) No.	Percentage
<i>Temporary</i>			
Class I	50	—	—
Class II	163	1	0.6
Class III	4,290	163	3.8
Class IV (excluding sweepers)	1,054	47	4.4
Class IV (sweepers)	123	—	—

1966 implementation of this constitutional responsibility was reflected as below:

The under-representation, i.e. the shortfall in the fulfilment of the reservations is ascribable to:

(i) unavailability or inadequate availability of suitable candidates for technical posts and for non-technical jobs in higher grades; and

(ii) indifference or carelessness on the part of recruiting-promoting authorities.

With the spread of education and with the government-given educational facilities, availability has been growing considerably.

While some government servants and Ministers sincerely endeavour to fulfil the reservations, there are others who are so pettyminded as to feel jealous and there are still others who are just indifferent or careless. For example, a number of such pettyminded ones talk glibly of Kinnaur being full of IAS officers. They would have one belief that this tribal district beats all the districts of Himachal Pradesh in this matter. The statistical truth is that, so far, there have been, in all, three IAS officers from Kinnaur (one of them did not benefit by the reservation) and one of the other districts, namely, Chamba, had five IAS officers. That the tribal areas have been coming forward and upward (to the extent they actually have been so coming) would simply indicate that the purpose of the reservations is being served.

The cooperative movement, so very much more the answer, in theory, to many of the economic problems of places like the tribal homelands of Himachal Pradesh, than to the problems of other places, has, except in a couple of rarer instances, been a failure, so far in practice. The failure is attributable as much to the member of the public as to the officials. The reasons have been corruption, mostly, and inefficiency next.

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission, 1960-61, has made a recommendation with regard to Himachal Pradesh in the following words:

No protective measures for protecting the lands of tribals and for preventing

exploitations by moneylenders have been taken. As the areas are being opened up rapidly by the construction of Hindustan-Tibet Road, non-tribals will enter these areas. It is likely that with the intrusion of non-tribals, the interests of tribals in land will be jeopardised. As it is a Union Territory we are of opinion that existing acts in force in other states for protection of the rights of tribals in land and from exploitations by moneylenders may be extended to these areas.

The Hindustan-Tibet Road (N.H. 22) concerns only one tribal homeland, namely Kinnaur. However, the protection is needed by the other tribal areas also. After having been chased relentlessly for the last 8 years or so, the government have had to get a law enacted to regulate the alienation of tribal lands to non-tribals, but it has yet to frame the rules and enforce the law.

The likelihood of exploitations from outsiders extends to spheres other than landed interests such as commercial spheres and fields of employment. Moreover, exploitation of the weaker sections by persons of unscrupulous nature who enjoy disproportionately strong financial levers, among the tribals themselves, cannot be ruled out. This has also to be checked.

The economic aspect may be summed up like this:

(1) There indeed has occurred a visible rise in the standard of living in all the tribal areas, especially Lahaul and Kinnaur; but most of this is fleeting and illusory.

(2) The temporary betterment of the standard of living has created habits, tastes and values which, if thwarted, would create serious reactions and repercussions. Therefore, the new economy must be stabilized to ensure a balanced and self-generating process.

(3) Till the tribals, especially those in the comparatively remoter border areas, are placed beyond risks of exploitations, safeguards must be adopted to shield them from exploitation at the hands of outsiders as well as the 'bigger fish of predatory type' among themselves.

#### THE SOCIAL ASPECT

Time was when the Monsoon clouds were about the only regular annual visitors from outside to Kinnaur and even the Monsoons fought shy of any massive invasion of the interior beyond Wangtu. Today, against a total indigenous population of about 41,000, there are, more or less, regularly living within the district all round the year, nearly 30,000 outsiders. Mostly, they are government employees, labourers and businessmen. All this abrupt influx of floating populations, never experienced before by a community that for centuries led a cloistered life, threatens social upheavals. That is the most striking social phenomenon in Kinnaur today.

The impact of extraneous social influences would not be so unsettling in the other tribal areas. Lahaul comes next to Kinnaur. The arrival of the

outsiders there has so far been neither so massive nor so sudden. Spiti seems to be the third in that line; Brahmaur the fourth and Pangi the last. Anyway, the principle of 'guided fashioning' of the new social patterns would apply, more or less and sooner or later, to all tribal homelands in Himachal.

Qualities of character such as honesty, straight-forwardness, courage, industry, enterprise, chastity, and frugality are virtues preservable in any place and any age. By and large the tribal people were once renowned for these traits. Even now certain areas have maintained a higher moral level, than in many non-tribal areas. But everywhere there is a growing struggle between the conservative instinct to preserve these virtues and the new-fangled urge for a code of conduct in which these values would seem to be the lot of the simpleton. Where the contamination has not yet gone too deep, reconstruction will be easier and this is the point to remember with reference to tribal people who have come in contact with all manner of things modern.

Then there are things worth continuing. The appetite for roughing it and the spontaneous abandon for song and dance and for flower and festival, inborn in these children of nature, should not be let to wilt and wither in the wake of 'modern monsoons' of influences which penetrate much faster and much farther by the vehicular road than did or do the seasonal Monsoons. Even when the ordinary day-to-day life has become easy or comfortable or incurious, occasions should be left for the exercise of the spirit and stamina that make a commando and a mountaineer. Even in a cinema-ridden future, which is already casting its shadows, some of the major fairs and festivals of the tribal areas should continue to be celebrated with full vigour and, as far as practicable, in their pristine glory. There is much worth preserving in these fairs and festivals. To realize this fully one has either to participate in them with a perceptive and inquisitive attitude or else to read detailed accounts with illuminating commentary.

The human material permanently inhabiting the border areas of the country will make all the difference from the point of view of defence. Kinnaur and Spiti touch the Tibetan border; Lahaul adjoins Ladakh; Pangi is not very far from Ladakh. As much for national good as for the good of the tribal people themselves, the essential fibre of this human material must remain tough and unspoilt. This will take effort. The new patterns of social life, if given unbridled head, tend to run away in wrong directions.

Polyandry, a custom of long standing, is on the decline. This social change for the better has a concomitant economic risk—the risk of partition. A polyandrous household had a built-in way of restraining fissiparous and centrifugal tendencies and of counteracting proliferation. In Spiti there is primogeniture. So the picture there is different in this respect. Elsewhere, each and every brother shares the ownership of the landed property of the household and possesses the legal right to seek and obtain separation of his share from the joint pool. This right is a powerful lever for the fragmen-



tation of holdings. And this economic lever is being suicidally used by many separately married brothers. Kinnaur seems to me to be the most imprudent tribal area in this sense. Efforts to get the government to check partition by legislation have gone in vain so far. Stray and sporadic personal advice mostly falls on deaf ears. Organized social effort might prove more fruitful. Legislation will still be desirable.

Purdah has been totally unknown in these tribal communities. Previously the intermingling between members of the opposite sexes used to be mostly within the tribe itself and, by and large, it was free and uninhibited, because, generally speaking, it was clean and innocent. In those days a single lady could travel for miles alone, fearing none but possibly a wild beast; and she had the courage and the defensive weapon of some kind or the other necessary against the beast. Today, in places, she dares not work alone in her fields even within the village territory. It is human beings and not wild beasts whom she has to worry about.

Once the ice was broken, the tribal people have taken greatly to schools and hospitals. The ice did take quite a bit of time to be broken.

In Kinnaur there are 74 primary schools, 14 middle, and 7 high schools. No village, i.e. no revenue estate, is without a school. That is a far cry from a few schools, that had when the British and the Raja quitted some 20 years ago. In the majority of the schools attendance is good. But saturation in terms of the total number of school-going children is still away. The major reason is that children are needed to help the family tide over manpower shortages for domestic duties a number of times in the year. This militates against regular attendance. The success-percentages in the annual examinations fall.

In Lahaul and Spiti, the policy adopted by the Government of India to finance very helpfully every child who went to any school, with or without a hostel, gave a mighty starting swing and the momentum still runs powerfully. There are adequate primary schools, every village being covered satisfactorily. Middle schools and high schools still need to be increased, as is the case in Kinnaur too.

Among the nomadic tribes, the Gujjars have been educationally served better than the Khampas, as nomads, because the former number for more and have less wandering lives than the latter. However, the settling inclination among the latter has considerably counter-balanced this disadvantage, as settled living has meant greater school-going.

The financial aid to individual students has decreased for the past some years, partly because the very quantum has shrunken and for the rest because the number of recipients has gone higher. There has arisen quite a hue and cry for greater financial aid from government to tribal students.

The keenness for higher education, liberal as well as technical, is noticeable especially in Kinnaur and Lahaul, finance being the only main limitation.

Kinnaur has today thirty-one medical service institutions; two of them civil hospitals, three primary health centres and 26 dispensaries, mostly Ayurvedic. The foremost need today is a well-equipped and well staffed district hospital at the district headquarters so that the patients do not have to come all the way to Simla for not only services like X-ray examination, but even for smaller needs. Here, in Simla, all the hospitals, in particular the Snowdon Hospital, remain usually so hard-pressed for bedded accommodation and so over-crowded generally that the patient and the attendant from places like Kinnaur often find themselves faced with an unenviable predicament. The shortage (still acute) of doctors, compounders and certain other categories of medical hands continues to negate too much of the good potentially represented by these impressive numbers of the medical institutions.

The other tribal areas, especially the Lahaul & Spiti district, are also well served in point of number of institutions, but the dilution of the benefit caused by shortage of personnel is serious there also.

The social aspect may be summarised as follows:

(1) To ensure soundly-guided development, organizations of mature and progressive local leaders should be set up and administrators in key positions should be 'handpicked' for their genuine zeal for the service of the tribal people, for their sympathetic understanding of tribal ways and problems and for their general soundness in character and calibre. Where necessary, they should be specially trained. In general, government employees, whether military, semi-military or civilian, should be kept under effective discipline. In certain cases laws and rules should be specially adapted to the peculiarities of tribal conditions. This transitional stage in the social history of the tribal areas is a delicate time. We do not want any bulls in the China shop.

(2) *Unless timely steps are taken to preserve.* When providing social services, the population figures should not be taken as the guide without keeping in the fore-front the difficult terrain over which small populations are thinly scattered.

#### THE POLITICAL ASPECT

Lahaul & Spiti had been under the direct British Raj for several generations before Independence dawned. Kinnaur, Pangi and Brahmaur remained under princely rule, for sometime, even after the British Raj in India had ceased, and it was only in 1948 that these areas were free from autocratic indigenous rule. At the time of the merger, Kinnaur formed part of the Bushahr State and Pangi and Brahmaur parts of Chamba State. Earlier, in all the areas, there existed for centuries and centuries despotic native rule of petty local chieftains holding sway over small territories; at others of a bigger ruler with larger area, with the petty ones either they wiped out or subdued under some kind of a central control.

It was a very wise step by the Government of India to organize Kinnaur

and Spiti-Lahaul into separate district, in 1960, for administrative and developmental purposes. The close and special attention so focused has paid rich dividends. These tribal people had, as mentioned above, age-old contacts and relations with the Tibetans. If the Chinese Communists had once succeeded in making an effective infiltration into these tribal areas across Tibet, the infiltration would have found plenty of means and material to exploit to their advantage. As it is, the Government of India's action forestalled all that. Today the situation, on the whole, is, I think, satisfactory and reassuring, but we cannot afford to take things for granted. Care, caution and action are still necessary. If the government servants on our side do not behave with the local people, the good done over the years by crores of rupees spent on and for the people can get marred. The people are basically loyal and grateful. They regard themselves Indians and they feel indebted to the nation for what has been and what is being done for them and in their area. But they are not so ignorant or foolish as not to have realized by now that for most of the development of their areas, the Chinese threat is the reason. Whatever else generations of poverty, autocratic rule and aloofness may or may not have done to them, their inherent sensitiveness of temperament and sense of self-respect have not died out. The common man has the common sense to compare actual conditions. If, in such matters as corruption, courtesy and character, our government servants show up unfavourably in comparison with those across the border, the psychological results can still be damaging.

Some politicians seem to assume the condescending attitudes of petty minded benefactors, while others seem to feel tempted to show off powers of authority. Some others seem myopically to think that, now that some severe years have elapsed since 1962, the border areas need no longer receive the same attention as hitherto after 1960. Such politics would be highly misplaced.

Democracy at the Panchayat level has, in many cases, been vitiated by corruption and/or inefficiency on the part both of the people's representatives themselves and the officials. Wherever this has not happened, the people have appreciated the good in Panchayats. Higher democracy began as a remote thing to the tribal people, their main test of a good or bad government being the type of the government servants with whom they had to deal. While the government servant still makes or mars much of the impression about the quality of the government of the day, the people have, by now, a far better idea of the way the governmental machinery functions. They now knew it too, in the majority, that the right to vote vests a power in their hands. The need for the political education of the voter in the tribal areas is roughly of the same order and quantum as elsewhere in Himachal Pradesh save for those portions of the Pradesh that are noted for their political forwardness. By and large the tribal people have now come to respond warmly to the call of democracy.

In the tribal-cum-border districts of Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti the Deputy

Commissioner should be chosen very carefully. I say this for the benefit of the tribal inhabitants as much as in the interest of the government.

I would conclude the 'Political Aspect' with the following:

(i) If the contentment of the tribal people in the border areas is ruffled, disturbed or destroyed despite the present satisfactory conditions and atmosphere, it will be because of wrong politics or corrupt officials or corrupt politicians. Our own failings and lapses, more than anything else, will be responsible if border loyalties get shaken.

(ii) Panchayats and cooperative societies must be toned up very considerably if democratic decentralization is to succeed and if democracy itself is to justify its claims to the people.

(iii) The inefficient government servant may still be deceived into laxity by the seeming political backwardness, docility and lack of 'aware-ness' on the part of the average tribal. He had better be careful and remember that resentments, when unvoiced and unaired tend to smoulder. And the employer, i. e. the government of the day, had also better remember this.

#### THE APPROACH

A question may be asked whether the tribal communities should be left to grow and change at their own pace of gradual evolution or whether a consciously planned process of development should be imposed.

The tribal people can no longer be left to themselves as under British and the Rajas, while the rest of the nation takes giant strides forward. In any case, in the border areas, the initiative has already been snatched by the forces generated by defence needs. Guided growth and change, preserving all that is preservable, would I think be the best course. Those at the guiding helm will bear a tremendous responsibility and they shall have to be chosen with extreme care.

#### APOLOGY

I wish I had much more time at my disposal for the preparation of this paper. I have been helpless against other preoccupations.



# The People of Kinnaur

DIVYADARSHI KAPOOR

## I

The word "tribe" is used as a "technical term" in Anthropology, with a wide variety of meanings. The evolutionists have used the word "tribe" to denote a stage in political evolution or in the evolution of social structure (Fried 1966, Sahlins 1961, Service 1962). Others have used it to designate a particular type of society, as distinguished from another type. In India specially a good deal of attention has been paid to the definition of "tribe" from this point of view (Bailey 1961, Dube 1960, Majumdar 1958, Mandelbaum 1956, Naik 1959, Sinha 1965, Srivastava 1966). In the ensuing discussion, I shall also touch upon this point and on current official usage of the word "tribe" specially in the context of 'tribe-caste' question in Kinnaur, but my major concern in this paper is with the use of the word "tribe" to designate a population whose members share a common culture. More strictly, I am using this word "tribe" to define the boundaries of culture bearing units.

The intention here is not to spell out a list of criteria of universal utility in defining the boundaries of "tribe" for cross cultural purposes. Naroll (1964) has attempted to do so, but as the comments accompanying his paper show, he has not succeeded. Naroll was concerned with arriving at a list of criteria and building up an "ideal type", which he labelled as the 'cultunit' so that it could be useful for cross-cultural purposes. No such pretensions are made here. Neither is this a critique of the criteria used by Naroll Moerman (1965: 1215) has done that and a reference to his paper should suffice. My concern is rather with the critical use of certain criteria to a specific body of data and to delineate the tribe or tribes in the population of the district of Kinnaur in the union territory of Himachal Pradesh. Thus, in the main this paper is concerned with the delimitation of culture bearing units in a specific context. I do hope, however, that the discussion will bring forward sufficient number of points of general theoretical interest aimed at arriving at a definition of "tribe" in the sense in which it is used here.

My interest is not in cross-cultural comparisons, it is rather in description and analysis of phenomena. The objective in delimiting the boundaries of the unity is to enunciate the validity of the observations, lest there be confusion with data pertaining to another unspecified unit bearing the same name or titled similarly.

There is an unfortunate practice among some anthropologists to use grandiose titles, suggestive of wider areas than the ones, about which their works are really about. This causes confusion. Thus, Majumdar's study of some villages in Jaunsar-Bawar, in Uttar Pradesh and Dube's study of a village in the Telangana region in Andhra Pradesh, bear the titles 'Himalayan Polyandry' and 'Indian Village' respectively. Cross-cultural comparisons apart, one might reasonably ask, how much claim do these studies have to such titles. A study of polyandry in the district of Kinnaur, or a village in that district have as much claim to bear the title 'Himalayan Polyandry' or 'Indian Village', as the studies cited above, though the pattern of polyandry or the structure of the village in this case may be materially very different. That studies of such wider areas, justifiably claiming such titles, through a statistical research design are possible as some quantitative sociologists claim, is a separate issue and it need not hold us here. An alternative is what Leach (1961) has done in his study of 'Pul Eliya'. But this has its own limitations, since on methodological grounds one may be required to study not merely a single village, but a region and the boundaries of the region need to be defined.

## II

This paper, as mentioned earlier, is devoted to the delimitation of "tribes" in the district of Kinnaur, in the union territory of Himachal Pradesh. It would therefore be appropriate to give an idea about the district, before a discussion of the problem of delineating the culture bearing units is begun.

Kinnaur, with an area of 2,517 square miles and a population of 40,980 distributed in 77 villages (*District Handbook*, 1965) was carved as a border district out of the Mahasu district by taking out the entire Chini tehsil and 14 villages of parganas Pandrabis and Atharabis of Rampur tehsil, on the 1st of May, 1960. The district lies in the valleys of the Sutlej and its tributaries. It is bounded in the north by Spiti, on the east by Western Tibet, on the south by the districts of Mahasu in Himachal Pradesh and Tehri Garhwal in Uttar Pradesh and on the west by Mahasu district. The district lies between north latitude 31°00'50".

The area comprising the present district of Kinnaur, constituted the north-eastern portion of the Bashahr State, one of the Simla Hill states, which merged to form the Mahasu district of Himachal Pradesh in 1948. According to the *Gazetteer of Bashahr State* (1911 :4), 'the upper or north-eastern portion of Bashahr is called Kanawar, and the rest of the State Kochi. The boundary between Kanawar and Kochi is the central chain of Eastern Himalayas forming the south-western barrier of the Baspa and from thence a stream called the Manglad Khad, which runs into the Sutlej east of Sarahan. The whole of Bashahr to the north of the Sutlej, and that portion on the south to the north-

east of this line belongs to Kanawar.' The area is characterized by Kanawari speech, as distinct from Kochi dialect spoken in the rest of the areas of the former Bashahr state. It is worth quoting Bailey (1909: 661) in this connection. He writes: 'Few languages have their limits defined with such mathematical precision as Kanauri. It begins abruptly at mile 92 on the Hindustan-Tibet Road and continues up the Satlaj River to past mile 192.' It might be added that what one comes across abruptly at mile 92 ('Manyoti dhar') on the Hindustan-Tibet Road is not merely the Kanauri language, but also a people who differ from their neighbours, in matters of dress, social customs, religious beliefs and practices. The people of the area regarding the 'Manyoti dhar' as defining their territorial boundaries. The reverence with which shepherds from Kinnaur even today bow and place a stone or cloth piece while crossing this place is symbolic of entry or exit from the territory.

Thus, even prior to the formation of the district of Kinnaur with its present boundaries, the area constituted a distinct territorial, linguistic and cultural entity and variously known and spelled in English as Kanawar, Kunawar, Kunowar, Koonawar, Knaor, Kanauri; in Tibetan as Khunu or Kunu; and in Hindi as Kinnar, Kinnar desh, Kannaure and Kanaur. The inhabitants of the area were mentioned as Kinnaura, Kanaura, Kinnara (the latter two are used in official designation of the Scheduled Tribe), Kunawarees, Kanore and the language of the tract as Kanawari, Kanauri, Kanorin.

### III

The implication and need of delimiting the boundaries of "tribe" was realized by me early in the course of my first field work in 1959, in what then constituted the Chini tehsil. I had then synoptically defined the Kinnaura as a "tribe the members of which inhabit a common territory, share a common name, have a common culture, possess a distinctive dress, have distinctive social customs, religious beliefs and practices, a distinctive language and have a 'we' feeling which marks them off from their neighbours". I had laid greater emphasis on language. 'The most important element which gives the Kinnaura a distinctiveness is the possession of a distinct mode of speech, namely, Kanawaria language of the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages, as distinct from the "Kochi" dialects of the Pahari group of languages of the Indo-Aryan type. It is this dialect which gives to the Kinnaura a consciousness of belonging to a group different from the other hill folk of the surrounding areas, whom he calls "Kocha" rather contemptuously'.

Adequate though this definition is for delimiting the people of Kinnaur as a distinct entity from those of the surrounding areas, it has certain limitations. These were brought home to me in my subsequent field trips and comparison of my observations with the ethnographic notes by Joshi (1911: 527) and

Rose (1911: 446-454). Even though their notes and my observations relate to the people of Kinnaur, yet they are materially so different as to warrant an impression that they relate to two different people. Excerpts from Joshi and Rose and my comments on them would make this more clear.

Joshi and Rose (they are being bracketted together because what they write is substantially the same) write: "Buddhism is the dominant faith"; 'On the birth of a son the goddess 'dolma' is adored. The child's horoscope is cast by a lama, who also names the child when it is 15 days old . . . charms for its long life are also made by lamas'. Marriage 'customs resemble those of Tibetans . . . lamas solemnizing the marriage'. 'The lamas used to consult their scriptures and advise as to the disposal of the dead. . . . After 15 days the lama does *homa*, *pūja*, and *path*, reciting Tibetan chants of purification. This ends the mourning. The *shrādh* also called *dūyang* is solemnized by the lama'. 'Kanet girls do not marry, but devote their time to the study of Tibetan scriptures . . . ' 'When a new roof is put on a temple . . . the lamas perform a ceremony . . . ' 'When a new house is ready the lama fixed the time auspicious for its occupation'.

Among the Kinnaura that I studied, Buddhism is not the dominant faith; in fact, but for an occasional flag on a building, a small monastery, an occasional 'Chorten'; 'Kanki' or entrance door at some villages, I did not come across any evidence of the prevalence of Lamaistic Buddhism in the areas visited during my first field trip to Kinnaur. My data do not indicate any role for the lama in ceremonies connected with child birth. The people are not very particular about the making of horoscopes. The children are given names when they are sufficiently grown up and not within 15 days of their birth. They continue to be addressed as 'Latu' or 'Shooti' as my genealogical records indicate. The lamas do not have anything to do with the solemnization of marriage or with the disposal of the dead or the performance of purificatory rites. Girls past marriageable age do not devote their time to the study of Tibetan scriptures, but remain with their parental families and work for them. No ceremony is performed by the lamas at the time of putting a new roof on the temple, nor does the lama fix the time auspicious for the occupation of a new house when it is ready.

The question naturally arises, why are the observations so different, when in my case as well as in theirs, the people under reference are the Kinnaur (even though they label them as Kanawaris or Kanauris)? It could not be that their observations were wrong or that such drastic changes had taken place during the period of 50 years that separated the two studies.

Subsequent extensive tours in Kinnaur and a perusal of the writings on Kinnaur by Atkinson (1882-86), Cunningham (1844), Gerard (1841) Home (1876), Jacquemont (1833), Madden (1846), Murray-Aynshley (1882), Pallis (1939), Sleen (1924), Sankrityayan (1948), Thomas (1852) were to provide the answer to the question posed above. The diversity in the observation on



the Kinnaura was due to the heterogeneity underneath the seeming and illusory homogeneity projected by the people's self-identification as a single entity and their bearing a single name Kinnaura or variants thereof. This is also borne out from a comparison of three village surveys carried out under the Superintendent of Census Operations, Himachal Pradesh, as part of the 1961 Census Operations (*Census of India 1961*, Vol. XX, Part VI, Nos. 1, 12 and 16). While making a reference to them, it must however be pointed out that their authors have made a mess of the monographs by publishing photographs, from villages other than the ones under study, and by including extracts from earlier writings which have no bearing on their units of study. Kinnaur and the Kinnaura, far from being homogenous, show clear-cut heterogeneity in respect of terrain, ecological conditions, race and religion, styles of dress, social customs and dialects.

This necessitates a fresh look at the working definition propounded above. There is need for delimiting not merely the boundaries of Kinnaur and Kinnaura (which is of utility in certain respects), but of units of study marked by a certain degree of homogeneity. In order to do so, it would be necessary to outline the elements of heterogeneity and see where they cut across each other to the minimum and meet for the maximum.

It is usual to divide the district of Kinnaur into two well meeked geographical regions, having different climate conditions.

(1) The Wet Zone comprising the area west of Wangtu, on both sides of the river Sutlej, where rainfall is abundant as in Simla and the region of the Baspa valley where too there is considerable rainfall.

(2) The Dry Zone lying to the east of Wangtu, where due to interception by the Himalayan ranges, monsoon does not reach, the rainfall decreases as one approaches the Tibetan border. This is evidenced by the change in vegetation. It is usual to regard Wangtu as the dividing line between the wet and the dry zone. This, however, is not strictly correct. The change in rainfall and vegetation is gradual and as Thomas (1852: 71) has put it: "In very rainy seasons, when the rainfall in the outer Himalaya is considerably above the mean, heavy showers extend into Kunawar, at least as far as Chini." Thomas (1852: 79) further writes: "From Chagaon to Pangi we had passed through the finest and most fertile part of Kunawar." Thus, it is beyond Pangi that the semi-arid zone of Kinnaur lies.

Corresponding to the boundaries of the wet and dry zones, one can draw a line depicting house types, there being gabled roofed houses in the wet zone and flat roofed houses in the entire dry zone east of Wangtu. But as one crosses Pangi and enters the real semi-arid zone, one also notices a sharp decline in the quantity of timber employed in building the houses. This is as it should be in a region where timber is so scarce.

Pangi also sets the limit in a real sense between people who depend on their livelihood mainly on terrace cultivation and those who practice

transhumance, being dependant largely on their flocks of sheep and goats and the trade and transport which they carry on with their aid. The Kinnaura shepherds who go down to the lower hills in Mahasu, Mandi, Suket and Bilaspur in search of winter pastures largely belong to villages beyond Pangi.

As one proceeds from Pangi upwards, a subtle change in women's hair style is noticeable. From the single pleat one marks the change to multiple pleats tied at their ends into one. This change is completed by the time Jangi is reached.

Pangi also marks the boundary from where onwards Lamaistic Buddhism is pronounced. As Atkinson (1882: 32) writes: "The people of upper Knaor are of Tibetan origin and Buddhist in religion . . . Buddhism extends down the valley of the Satlaj as far as Sarahan between which and Pangi is a debateable ground common to Hindus and Buddhists." Similarly, Sven Hedin writes: "In Chini '*Om mani padme hum*' has not all its own way with the souls of men. We are now in a district where Lamaism is losing its hold and Hinduism has the upper hand."

There seems to be a correspondence between ethnic type and religion. The Mongoloid element increases as the Tibetan border is approached. Thus, Thomas (1852: 109) writes: 'The gradual transition, in ascending the Sutlej from Hinduism to Buddhism is very remarkable, and not the less so because it is accompanied by an equally gradual change in the physical aspect of the inhabitants, the Hindus of the lower Sutlej appearing to pass by insensible gradations as we advance from village to village, till at last we arrive at pure Tartar population.' Early travellers and explorers have alluded to the population upward of Pangi as Tartar.

Pangi thus stands fairly well as the dividing line demarcating the Sutlej valley of Kinnaur into two in terms of climate, livelihood patterns, style of dress, religion, and ethnic type. Of the elements contributing to the heterogeneity of Kinnaur adumbrated above, only one remains to be examined and that is language.

Fried (1966: 7) has commented 'that few, if any, ethnographers have systematically examined the linguistic data of their societies towards this end'. Fortunately, we are in a position to do so for Kinnaur, since, of all the aspects of Kinnaur, its language has attracted the greatest attention of scholars. Apart from Grierson's *Linguistic Survey of India* (1927), there are several works on the linguistic aspects of Kinnaur. Mention among these may be of Bailey (1909) and Sten Konow (1906). I might, however, add my reservations that not being a linguist I depend almost entirely on what has been published.

The dialects spoken in Kinnaur and classified as Kanawari belong to the Complex Pronominalized dialects of the Himalayan branch of the Tibeto-Burman languages. Besides these, Nyamkad, which is a dialect of Tibetan is spoken in Hangrang ghor (an administrative unit). The people of Hangrang are known as Jad or Nyam and constitute a distinct linguistic and cultural entity.

A dialect of Tibetan is also spoken by the people inhabiting the territory between Kanum and the Tibetan border. They constitute yet another distinct linguistic and cultural entity.

There are five dialects of Kanawari (Bailey mentions only four. From the area of distribution for Theborskad given by him it appears he includes the Sumchu dialect under Theborskad). These are:

(i) *Lower Kanauri*. This is spoken in the north of Sutlej between miles 92 and 104 of the Hindustan-Tibet Road.

(ii) *Standard Kanauri*. According to Bailey, 'this is spoken from miles 92 to miles 162, i.e. from two miles beyond Sarahan to Jangi. Between miles 92 to 104, it is spoken only on the south side of the river. According to my information it is spoken and understood only upto Pangi and not Jangi. I am told the dialect from Rarung onwards differ from Standard Kanauri and are not intelligible to the speakers of Standard Kanauri.

(iii) *Chitkuli*. It is spoken only in two villages, Chitkul and Raksham in the Baspa valley. It is not understood by other speakers of Kanauri language.

(iv) *Theborskad*. Its distribution as given by Bailey is doubtful. He admits that he has not studied it. But leaving out the villages of Kanam and Labrang (where Sumchu is spoken) from his list one would have its distribution limited to the villages of Lippa, Asran, Shunam and Shaso. Bailey mentions that 'Kanauris living within ten miles of where it begins to be spoken cannot understand more than half of it. This constitutes a linguistic and cultural entity. Branderth (1878: 17, 31) states that Theborskad is spoken as Bunan in Lahaul, where also this dialect is spoken. But, this should not lead us to include the Bunan speakers of Lahaul in the same tribe.

(v) *Sumchu*. This is spoken in the villages of Kanam, Labrang and Spilo. Its speakers constitute a distinct linguistic and cultural entity.

Out of these dialects only lower Kanauri and Standard Kanauri are intelligible mutually and thus inter-communication between their speakers is not only possible but also actually takes place. They could therefore be merged to define the boundaries of the "tribe" in Kinnaur inhabiting the tract upto Pangi. Other dialects could fruitfully be used to demarcate the boundaries of other "tribes" in Kinnaur, using the word "tribe" to define distinct culture bearing units.

To sum up, I have defined "tribe" at two levels in the context of Kinnaur, the two levels are not mutually exclusive, but related to each other. At one level, I have used "tribe" to define and delimit the boundaries of Kinnaura as a particular society different from its neighbours and on the other to delimit the legitimate fields of enquiries therein.

The first level could be useful in defining who a Kinnaura is and though not explicitly defined as such, is taken to mean theoretically at least as such in current official usage. However, because of the existence of stratification in

Kinnaur, certain ambiguities have cropped up in its application.

Broadly speaking, the Kinnaura have three stratified groups—the Kanet or what are known as Rajput, the Damang and the Chamang. Even though the Chamang speak a dialect akin to Kochi and therefore different from Kanauri spoken by others, they are not to be regarded as a separate “tribe”. Sven Hedin (1913: 403) while writing about Chini commented: “The village is said to contain 500 inhabitants, who all belong to one tribe called Kanauri and the divided into three clans, each with its own language or at least a dialect widely different from the other two.” He was mistaken in calling these strata as clans.

It may be pointed out here that the Damang and the Chamang are two strata among the stratified Kinnaura and even if one were to translate ‘zatus’ in Kinnauri as ‘jat’ or caste, it should be borne in mind that they are so in the context of Kinnaur alone. Attempts at labelling them by caste names associated with occupations as found elsewhere disregarding the names by which they are known in Kinnaur, have led to their being made a part of the All-India Caste System. A consequence of this misinterpretation and project of all India caste model has been that the Rajputs are now known as ‘Sawarn’ or high caste and the Damang and Chamang as ‘Harijan’. While the Rajputs in spite of the label ‘Sawarn’ continue to be listed and enumerated as a Scheduled Tribe, the Damang and Chamang are listed and enumerated as members of the Scheduled Castes.

The scheduling of communities is aimed at providing the communities so scheduled with certain privileges and safeguards. Logically one could be placed only under one schedule and not under both (though some administrative officials have confided in me that they have tried to give benefit under either category to the Damang and Chamang). The number of Scheduled Tribe people being less, those included under the schedule of tribes have less competitors than those included in the schedule for castes. Thus, the Damangs and Chamangs are constantly at a disadvantage in acquiring the benefits according to the members of the Scheduled Tribes.

There is, therefore, an urgent need for the proper understanding of these related though different levels of definitions of “tribe”.

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# The Tribal Situation in Bihar

SACHCHIDANANDA

## I

Across the belt of middle India running from the border of Gujarat through Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Orissa and Bengal lies a vast tract of undulating upland interspersed with hilly spurs and fertile valleys. The area is generally forested and the eastern part is richly endowed with valuable mineral deposits. It is peopled, by and large, by tribal communities. In the state of Bihar, this area is covered by the Chotanagpur division and the Santhal Parganas district of the Bhagalpur division. 90% of the tribals in Bihar are concentrated in this area. The density of the tribal population differs from district to district ranging from as low a percentage as 8% in Dhanbad to 61% in Ranchi. The scheduled areas in the state are therefore restricted to the Ranchi district, the Latehar and Dalbhum subdivisions in Palamau and Singhbhum districts respectively and the Rajmahal, Godd and Durnka sub-divisions of the Santal Parganas district. In the entire area the tribals account for only 34% of the total population. Although the 1961 Census registered an over-all rise in the tribal population, the increase was much below the average increase for the entire state. This led to a fall in the proportion of tribals in various areas. Another reason for this fall is the large scale influx of population from other parts of Bihar and India in these areas on account of the increasing pace of industrialization.

The tribals of this area generally belong to the proto-Australoid stock though traces of Mongoloid strain have found in parts of Santal Parganas. They are of average height, dark brown in colour and generally healthy. They belong to thirty different communities each with its distinctive culture and institutions. Although the social intercourse between the tribals and non-tribals in the region has not been unrestricted, the extent of acculturation on the linguistic level is as remarkable as the extent of miscegenation on the ethnic level. In the tribal region both in the town and in the village the number of light skinned tribals is substantial.

The tribals differ widely among themselves in the level of socio-economic development. The number of people living entirely by hunting and food gathering is very small. There are, however, a few tribal communities still devoted to shifting cultivation. These are Asur, Birjia, Hill Kharia and Sauria

Paharia. The rest of the tribals, who form 95% of the tribal population, are settled agriculturists engaged in plough cultivation in villages, plateau and hill slopes, 93% reside in the villages and subsistence cultivators. 67% of the tribal households have a holding of less than five acres. As most of the land is hilly, it is difficult for them to produce any surplus. Some thousands of tribals are also engaged in the various industrial undertakings in the area. Some tribals like Mahali and Chik Baraik are good artisans and make excellent baskets and weave cloth.

As in their economic organization, so also in their world-view, tradition orientation and commitment to their past, the tribals differ among themselves. In some cases their level of socio-cultural integration is low, in other it is vigorous and potent. Among some, their cultural institutions are extremely simple, among others they are highly complex and elaborate. Some have very simple religious beliefs and rituals, while others have a plethora of gods and goddesses. Most of them subscribe to belief in witchcraft and sorcery. Severe penalty is prescribed in tribal social code for persons found guilty of these offences.

## II

The tribes of Bihar have a number of languages of their own. Most of the tribal languages fall into two categories: the Austric and the Dravidian. Mundari, Ho, Santali, Kharia, Birhori, etc. belong to the Austric family while Kurukh, the language of the Oraon and Malto, the language of the Maler of Santal Parganas belong to the Dravidian group. Mundari, Santali, Ho and Oraon are well developed languages and have their own literatures also. For a long time their folklore was communicated through the oral tradition but they have now been written down and fresh works are also appearing either in the Devnagri or in Roman script. However, large number of tribals speak Hindi or one of its dialects like Magadhi, Bhojpuri, Gawari or Sadani and have returned them as their mother tongue in the Census. 17.64% of the tribes in Bihar speak Hindi as their mother tongue. Another 17% are bilingual and besides their mother tongue, they speak Hindi or one of its dialects as a second language. 34% or more than a third of the Bihar tribals are well conversant with the regional language. On Bengal and Orissa borders they speak Bengali and Oriya as secondary languages. In Chotanagpur, the language of the weekly markets and the small town is Sadani or Gawari whose scripture is like Hindi but the vocabulary contains a large number of tribal words. Among all the tribals, the Oraon in most areas have lost their language and adopted Mundari or Sadani, but the Munda, Ho and Santal cling to their language tenaciously.

The medium of instruction in Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas at all levels is Hindi. According to government instructions, the medium at the



primary level should be the mother tongue but upto now this is not so either because of paucity of teachers or of good text-books with the result that the percentage of literacy among the tribals is only 9.2% or half of the average for the state of Bihar. Demands are made by certain sections of tribals for the introduction of tribal languages as their medium of instruction but it is more or less political. It cannot, however, be denied that primary education can spread faster in the tribal areas with the mother tongue as the medium. A section of the tribals do not like the tribal language as the medium as they suppose that they would not take to Hindi as easily as now, if this were so. If they are taught everything through Hindi, they would be in a better position to compete with others on their own terms.

### III

The tribal areas in Bihar have not been entirely isolated from the rest of the state and the country at large. Non-tribal Hindu and Muslim communities have been living in the midst of tribals for several centuries. There is no tribal village in which a few Hindu caste families do not reside. They perform certain essential services for the tribals. Most of them speak the tribal languages and are in many cases indistinguishable from the tribals. Besides these, in many areas there are high caste Hindus. A number of Brahmana projects were introduced into this area by Maharaja of Chotanagpur who on his release from Mughal captivity affected the ways of Hindu princes. A number of Rajputs were also given *jagirs* by them. Thus they represented an alternative reference model for the tribals. It was through them that the tribals imbibed a number of Hindu beliefs and rituals. It is through these channels that Hindu culture trickles into tribal areas.

The weekly markets which are very much frequented by the tribals are also effective channels for the dissemination of alien ideas and objects. Businessmen from the town visit the market for the sale of their own products and for purchasing raw materials, grain and vegetables. They adopt indigenous methods for the advertisement of their wares. Loud speakers are blaring all the time and even hand bills are distributed.

Since independence, the number of government servants moving in the tribal areas has been large. With the opening of schools, teachers arrive. With these people the tribals are in close contact. They have acted as innovators unconsciously. Besides these are the programmes of induced or planned and deliberate change which produce an impact on the tribals. Though these are aimed at changing some sectors of economic activity they indirectly affect other sectors of life and in the long run bring structural change in society.

As the majority of tribal agriculturists are not able to produce enough for their subsistence, they have been in the practice of going out to seek

employment in the four months' slack agricultural season soon after the paddy harvest in December. They go to the tea gardens of Assam and North Bengal, to the Jute mills and brick kilns round about Calcutta. Some of them go there for longer periods and return after many years. When these people come back they are laden not only with cash but with rich experience of the world outside, new ways of life and alternative patterns of behaviour.

In recent times industrialization has come to Chotanagpur in big way. The sound of the siren and the clang of steel can now be heard in such sleepy wooded areas where only chirps of birds disturbed the silence. Tribals have been drawn in these industries mostly as unskilled labour. They have suddenly come into contact with people from all parts of the country. They have been thrown into the vortex of industrialism and have been exposed to new influences, values, attitudes and beliefs.

Rapid growth of education at the university level has helped to break down the insularity of tribal life and thought. The four general elections and the Panchayat elections have brought political consciousness in the tribal areas as different parties vie for their votes. The construction of new roads and railway lines in remote areas and the broadcast for the tribals from the Ranchi station of the All India Radio have exposed them to happenings not only in Chotanagpur but in the entire country.

#### IV

As mentioned earlier, the tribals of Bihar live in the midst of non-tribal population and in the various districts of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas. In the tribal villages there is close economic relationship between the different tribal and non-tribal communities. In villages where caste Hindus are big landholders, tribals work on their land. They also borrow money from them and the moneylenders are invariably non-tribal petty traders. In many parts of Santal Parganas the lands of tribals are held in mortgage by the moneylenders. With the lower Hindu castes there is a functional interdependence; a sort of *jajmani* system has been in vogue for long. In the industrial areas the tribals work hand in hand with the non-tribals as labourers. Most of the big industries in the tribals areas are owned either by the State or by non-tribal industrialists from outside Bihar. These industries offer employment to the tribals and lead them to an alternative means of subsistence from their traditional agricultural economy.

The community development programme worked schemes of area development in which the entire population of the area, whether tribal or non-tribal benefitted. The major and medium irrigation schemes in the area stepped up the produce of fields in their catchment area without any distinction of caste or community. Similarly educational development from primary to

the university level dispelled ignorance for the area as a whole. The immense development of communication facilities led to the opening up of the entire region. The very location of the Heavy Engineering Corporation complex, the Damodar Valley Corporation, the Thermal Power Stations, etc. were based on the concept of area development, even though for tribals in certain cases the social costs were very high and suffering was great in the initial stages. Some of the industries came up sheerly due to economic considerations, viz. the availability of raw materials, power, etc. Thus the concept of area development was kept in view by the planners in evolving schemes of economic uplift of the region.

## V

In the tribal areas of Bihar, the same system of administration obtains as in other areas. In early days the villagers knew only three types of government officials—the revenue collector, the village chawkidar and the forest guard. With the advent of independence and the start of the community development programme, the long arm of the administration has reached the remote corners of villages. For a long time the villagers, hitherto used to the minimum administration, were at a loss to comprehend the possibilities of the new development-oriented administration. As the community development programme stressed the fulfilment of targets and was more interested in the total development of the area rather than with that of the tribals, the latter were dismayed. They found that their erstwhile exploiters, the non-tribal middle class got all the schemes and benefited most from the development projects. The Block staff, most of whom belonged to non-tribal areas were corrupt and it was next to impossible for a poor tribal to get any grant, subsidy or loan from the Block without greasing the palm of the penal officials. Thus the development projects spread a lot of disaffection against the government. Everything sponsored by the bureaucracy was looked upon with distrust and suspicion by the tribals. Efforts made by the government to impart short training in tribal life and culture to the different levels of bureaucracy were not very effective.

The policies framed by the government for the economic betterment of the tribals were not realistic. They followed the same type of pattern as in non-tribal areas. Even those that were specially framed for tribal areas failed at the operational level due to bad administration co-ordination and a lot of avoidable red-tape. Most of the funds meant for tribals were cornered by the non-tribals. Thus the policies of the government did not assuage the feelings of the tribals either with regard to economic or educational benefits or in the matter of employment.

## VI

The tribes of Bihar have a well developed pattern of traditional leadership. Among the settled agricultural tribes which constitute more than 90% of the tribal population, the traditional leadership consists of secular and sacerdotal village headmen who are known by different names among the different tribes. The office of the secular headman is hereditary while the sacerdotal headman is chosen from a particular family by a method of divination from the dominant clan of the village. Both of them hold service lands from the village community. They wield enormous influence among the villagers and guide the deliberations of the village panchayat.

Among some tribes there are unions of villages called Parha, Pargana or Pir over which a divisional headman presides. This office is also hereditary. In Munda and Oraon areas, the head of the Parha used to preside over Parha panchayat whose office-bearers held titles based on the officials in the court of the Maharaja of Chotanagpur. In Santal and Ho areas, the divisional headman enjoyed certain revenue and police powers too. During British rule and in the years immediately following these traditional leaders enjoyed tremendous authority and wielded effective power in the tribal community. But gradually with the decay of Parha panchayat, village panchayat, introduction of government panchayats, withdrawal of police and revenue powers, growth of education and of the new rich class and breakdown of the social solidarity of the village the traditional leaders have lost much of their influence and prestige.

In Bihar we do not have a traditional chief for each tribe nor is there a pan-tribal leader. Of course, in the past there have been leaders of tribal movements like the Santal 'Hul', the Birsa 'Ulgulan' on the Tana Bhagat in which the authority of the charismatic leader transcended the bounds of a single tribe. Thus the soil was ripe for the development of modern political leadership.

The first stirrings of political consciousness among the tribals of Bihar can be traced to the activities of one J. Bartholmen—an orphan from Chaibasa who was a student of the St. Columba's College, Hazaribagh. He organized a Christian students' organization. Later on the students' organization blossomed into the 'Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj' whose objective was to work for the uplift of Chotanagpur and to improve the social, political and economic status of the tribals. All the educated tribal youths were members of this Samaj. It submitted a memorandum to the Simon Commission. Later on some members started a Kisan Sabha to focus attention on the problems of peasants. They set up candidates for the general election in 1936 without any success. Uptil now the Catholics had kept aloof from these organizations. They formed an organization of their own known as Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha under the inspiration of the Archbishop of Chotanagpur. Thus for the first time the Christian church lent its active support to a purely political organization. Their organization was so efficient that they swept the polls at



the Ranchi municipal elections. Encouraged with this they formed an alliance of all tribal organizations which was called the Chotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha. It was early in 1939 that Sri Jaipal Singh became its leader.

After sometime it was realized that it was desirable to include the non-Adivasis living in Chotanagpur in this organization. To press this viewpoint Justin Richard organized the United Jharkhand Block late in 1948. After resisting the idea for some time Jaipal Singh accepted it and the Jharkhand Party was formed in 1950 in Jamshedpur as the political wing of the Adivasi Mahasabha. The Jharkhand Party won spectacular success in the Assembly elections for 1952 and 1957 from 1950 onwards to secure the merger of the Jharkhand party with the Congress as the latter realized that without the aid of the former its chances in Chotanagpur were doomed. The efforts for merger were actively pursued when Binodanand Jha was the Chief Minister of Bihar and it was completed in 1963. Jharkhand party leaders were tired of sitting in the opposition and believed that once in government they could actively pursue policies for tribal welfare. They would also fight for a separate state of Jharkhand inside the Congress. They also demanded a Regional Development Board for the area and a separate unit of the Congress for Chotanagpur which would be controlled by erstwhile leaders of the Jharkhand party. Two other factors that weighed with the Jharkhand Party in favour of the merger was the growing influence of the Janta Party in the area, and the difficulties in raising resources for their organizational work. Due to these two factors their strength had slumped from 30 in 1957 to 20 in 1962 elections.

It was not, however, realized that the Congress was a vast party in which the identity of Jharkhand leaders would be lost. The factional politics in Bihar Congress afflicted the merger from the start. With the resignation of Binodanand Jha in pursuance of the Kamraj Plan, Jaipal Singh was dropped from the ministry and his lieutenant S.K. Bage was made a minister by the new Chief Minister K.B. Sahay. The rank and file of the party was not happy with the merger and even Jaipal Singh occasionally held out threats of leaving the Congress. The merger was never officially ratified by the party conference.

In the fourth general election, the Jharkhand leaders suffered the blast of the anti-Congress wind. S.K. Bage lost his security deposit. Many tribal leaders lost their seats and even Jaipal Singh scrapped through in the election. A number of splinter groups of the old Jharkhand party were still active. As these were in opposition to the ruling party they were more popular with the masses. Collaboration with the ruling party thus proved a milestone round the neck of tribal leaders. The lot of the tribals had not improved even with two of their representatives in the government. There was a widespread feeling of resentment against such leaders. There was a vacuum in leadership. A number of new parties and organizations sprang up to fill up this vacuum. The

Birsa Seva Dal, Krantikari Morcha, the Chotanagpur Plateau Praja Prshad and some splinter groups calling themselves the Jharkhand party appeared on the political scene. The Birsa Seva Dal which was boosted by the missionaries in one area and the communists in another, believed that Jharkhand could not be achieved by begging. Its leadership consisted of young educated tribals. Their slogans were 'Jharkhand Hamara Hai' and 'Jharkhand Larke Lenge—Teer Ke bal par' or 'Jharkhand is ours' and 'Jharkhand will be won by a fight with the force of arrows'. This exclusive tribal face of the Birsa Seva Dal is not relished by the old or new Jharkhand leaders as it takes the wind out of their call for a separate state consisting of both tribals and non-tribals. It may be noted that in the area being claimed for Jharkhand there are only 34% tribals.

In the Kolhan area in the Singhbhum district there is a crisis of confidence in the traditional leadership. After the Kol insurrection in the first quarter of the 19th century the area was placed under indirect rule. The traditional leaders, village headman known as Munda and the divisional headman of the Pir known as Manki became the instruments for the indirect rule. They were invested with police and revenue powers. In course of time the Munda and Manki came to form an exclusive privileged class having command over vast economic resources. Below that class came their immediate relations who were known as the Naeki. The rest of the people were called the subjects or the Parja. The division of the Ho tribe into an upper and lower class facilitated the exploitation of the latter. The former began to ape the standard of living of the government officers and maintained a distance from the Parja. Most of them were often venal and corrupt and took advantage of their position for amassing more wealth at the expense of the commoners. Due to the operation of Wilkinson's Rule which was the sanction for the indirect administration, the grievances of the commoners do not reach the administration. There is great resentment against this among the people at large. The introduction of government-sponsored panchayats, the growth of education, employment of people in industries and the general elections made the Parja realize their power. Uptil now all the MLAs from Ho areas belong to the Manki, Munda and Naeki class. They are big landholders and are all related to each other. People in general want the abolition of Wilkinson's Rule. To divert the attention of the Parja, the upper class incite them against the poorer non-tribals, popularly known as 'Diku'. They are, however, hand in glove with the rich non-tribal industrialists who help them with funds and oblige them in several other ways. This has led to the creation of an explosive situation in which the common masses, oppressed and indignant, may rise against established authority which is sustaining the traditional oligarchic social structure. Certain extremist elements have already entered the area to exploit the situation.

## VII

Like tribal areas in other parts of India, Chotanagpur is also seething with discontent. For the past two years the discontent has been very much aggravated and has led to large scale violence on various occasions. The causes of the unrest are many. Some of these are of very long standing while the others are of recent origin. They are the results of several factors, economic, socio-psychological and political. Efforts to solve them have been made in the past but not with much success. Thus the tribal problem continues to be complex and intractable. The present unrest represents a culmination of the pent up feelings and grievances of the tribesmen.

It is well known that most of the land in tribal areas have been reclaimed from the forest and made fit for cultivation by them and their forefathers. As they are predominantly agriculturists, they are deeply attached to land. Land is not just a means of subsistence for them, it is a spiritual bond between them and their ancestors. As such, any loss of land is deeply resented by them. The process of land alienation has been in operation in tribal areas for a long time. The recurrent needs of cash, frequent famines and the habits of drinking have forced the tribals into the clutches of moneylenders who in course of time get tribal land transferred to them. This process was sought to be checked by the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act of 1908. However, taking advantage of several loopholes in the Act, land alienation steadily continued and the Dhebar Commission in 1960 made a pointed reference to this evil and called for immediate action to stop it.

In the wake of industrialization, large scale alienation of tribal land took place in Ranchi, Hata, Bokaro, etc. causing widespread resentment. Although adequate compensation was paid by the industrial undertakings, the tribals were uprooted from their hearth and home.

Inadequate credit facilities have led to the exploitation of tribals by unscrupulous moneylenders. Loans were advanced to them in cash and kind at exorbitant rates of interest. The tribals being illiterate could not keep track of their repayment, if they made any. Sometimes in lieu of interest, the moneylender used to cultivate the land of the debtor and claimed its produce. Even if the tribal continued to cultivate it, he had to part with a major portion of his produce as interest on the loan. The machinations of the landlords were so widespread that there was great resentment among the people and the wrath of the rebels in the Santal Insurrection in 1955 was chiefly directed against them.

In the matter of planned development, the tribals feel that they have been always neglected. Tribal agriculture cannot look up unless adequate irrigation facilities are made available. In this direction, not much effort has been made. In many villages there are no arrangements for the supply of drinking water. Somehow the tribals have not been able to take full advantage

of schemes for economic development. Thus, by and large they continue to be as poor as before.

The tribals have not benefited from industrialization. In the matter of employment their claims have been skipped over. As there was lack of appointment for industrial training, trained personnel were not available in their ranks. Although they had to give up their home and means of subsistence for the industry, an alternative employment was not given to them. This led to strong feelings of resentment.

During the last two decades there has been phenomenal growth of education at all levels. This will be seen from the figures of enrolment:

	Primary	Middle	Secondary	University
1961	2,36,000	60,000	20,000	1,868
1966	3,10,000	1,10,000	25,000	3,522
% of Increase	31.4	82.4	22.9	88.5

Most of the persons who are at the secondary school or at the university would not go back to work in the village and look for employment outside. Unemployment among the educated tribals has been mounting fast. As against this it is seen that the posts reserved for scheduled tribes have not been filled for one reason or the other. This drives them to disappointment and frustration.

In recent times the area has witnessed a revolution of rising expectations caused by the process of modernization. Growth of education also led to the emergence of a middle class among the tribals. Its ranks are swelled by educated tribals who are in government service or in professions like teaching, medicine and law. Brought up in liberal and democratic traditions and conscious of their rights as citizens in free India, this middle class is desirous of participating in the government. It is keen that its voice receives the attention it deserves. It serves as the mouthpiece of tribal aspirations, though it cannot be said that all that it demands is for the ultimate good of the tribal masses at large. It is this class which is in the forefront of the demand for keeping jobs in Chotanagpur for the tribals alone, as it bears the burnt of the competition from people from north Bihar or other parts of India.

From this class also stems the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand. The demand was broached in the late forties and is a rallying ground for tribals of diverse political opinions. Although Christians form only 10.6% of the tribal population, there is a fond hope among them that Jharkhand will be Christian state and as such they would have much say therein. Naturally this demand has the backing of the Christian churches.

The demand is strengthened by the frustration with which the tribal is faced on different counts. Uptil now the demand was verbal, now it is taking



a militant turn. The growth of infra-nationalism in tribal Bihar is on the same lines as in the hill areas of Assam where recently some autonomy has been granted by the union government. For sometime past, the desperate mood of the tribals is reflected in the spate of violence and in the militancy of their slogans.

From April 1968, the Adivasi agitation in Chotanagpur began to take a violent turn. It originated from a dispute between a Hindu lawyer and landlord over the latter's right to collect dues from the petty traders in a weekly market a few miles from Ranchi. A bitter controversy raged followed by a hate campaign and skirmishes between tribal and non-tribal students. One Lalu Oraon, a post-graduate student of the Ranchi University who was also a leader of Birsa Seva Dal was beaten up by a group of non-Adivasi students in which the son of the lawyer, mentioned above, also figured. An angry Adivasi mob surrounded the house of the lawyer and a serious situation was averted on an assurance being given by the authorities that guilty students would be punished. But the issue continued to smoulder. Satyagrah in the premises of Ranchi University continued for months. University examinations were disturbed and the Vice-Chancellor was gheraoed many times.

Another incident occurred on June 2, 1968. One Bhola Sahu, a Bania built a house at Chiri about 40 miles west of Ranchi on a plot of land which originally belonged to an Oraon. Bhola Sahu had taken possession of the land in lieu of a loan given to the tribal a few years back. He was involved in a land dispute with another Oraon in a neighbouring village. The villagers, unable to curb Bhola Sahu, sought the intervention of the Birsa Seva Dal. A large mob of tribals attacked and set fire to this house. Ultimately the police had to be called and there was a firing leading to three deaths.

A few months later a tribal brought a chit from a Christian missionary for treatment of some ailment. The chit was addressed to the missionary doctor at Chainpur in Ranchi (district) but the tribal by mistake took it to the government doctor who turned him away. When the doctor saw a large mob coming to attack him he sought refuge in the local police station. The mob attacked the police station. Here also there was firing in which three young school girls lost their lives. They had been put in the forefront by the organizers of the demonstration.

## VIII

In the mid-term elections, out of 29 seats for scheduled tribes in Bihar, 18 were won by several independent candidates, eleven of whom later came together under the banner of Jharkhand party. The Hul (Revolutionary) Jharkhand Party organised by Justin Richard won seven seats. Justin Richard was an erstwhile colleague of Jaipal Singh. He took advantage of the anti-moneylender activities of Sibu Murmu, a leftist Santal worker, who had gone

underground. He also organized forcible cutting of paddy from fields pawned by Santals to the moneylenders. He wields great influence in Santal Parganas. The Jharkhand party has joined the coalition ministry in Bihar on the assurance that a Statutory Autonomous Board would be formed for the development of Chotanagpur. The Hul Jharkhand party is sitting on the fence.

Another trend in tribal politics in Bihar which has tended to develop a clear focus is the emergence of non-Christian tribal leadership. It may be noted that political consciousness was fostered in Chotangapur by the Christian tribal leadership. All the prominent leaders of the past and present Jharkhand party are Christians. The Christian tribals, by dint of their better education and the organizational facilities afforded to them by the church have come in the forefront and the majority of the tribal legislators until recently came from their ranks. The Christians are educationally and economically more advanced than the rest of the people. They enjoy more than 80% of the 4,538 post-Matric scholarships awarded in 1966-67. It is they who reaped the advantages of all development projects. Most of the Mukhias were also drawn from their ranks. All this roused the jealousy of the non-Christian tribals who were neglected by the government in matters of educational and economic development. Even in the Congress the voice of the non-Christian tribals was drowned by the more vocal and articulate Christian leaders. In the Congress there are some influential leaders who feel that in view of their progress in education and other fields, the Christian tribals should not be given the privileges, educational as well as economic, by the State. The amount now spent on advanced sections of tribals should be diverted to the non-Christian tribals who are still very backward. During the visit the Chanda Committee to Ranchi in November 1968 a big demonstration was held under the leadership of Kartik Oraon, MP, to stress this point of view. Oraon is also the President of the Akhil Bharatiya Adivasi Vikas Parishad, a non-Christian tribal organization. The quest for a more distinctive and militant leadership to this section has been satisfied by the Jan Sangh. The Jan Sangh has been working in interior tribal areas for only a few years but it has succeeded in winning the favour of non-Christian tribals by emphasizing the points of similarity between them and Hindus and showing to them that they can espouse their cause better than by any other party. In the mid-term elections the Jan Sangh consolidated its position by winning 7 and 4 seats from Ranchi and Palamau districts respectively in the Bihar Assembly. In future the tension between Christian and non-Christian tribals is likely to grow.

The political situation in tribal Bihar is apparently quiet but it may be a lull before the storm. The smouldering embers of unrest are kept alive by the concessions made by the Government of India to meet the aspirations of the tribals in Assam and Nagaland. The CPI does not support the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand as the tribals would still be in a minority in that region and exploitation may not end. The CPI (M) lends active support to to

the demand and proclaims its sympathy for the readjustment of boundaries in mixed areas for administrative units in such areas as may create tribal majority units wherever feasible. Certain extremist elements have printed a collection of the sayings of Mao Tse-Tung in a book which bears the caption 'Sayings of Birsa' in a tribal language. For creating rapport with the tribals an extremist leftist worker has married an Oraon girl, taken an Oraon name and had been adopted in the Oraon community. Being alarmed by the growing influence of the Jan Sangh in certain areas, the missionaries are actively supporting the demand for autonomous state. Industrialists in tribal areas are helping Jharkhand party leaders by financing their elections and consolidating their influence for reasons of their own. The hand of certain anti-national communal organizations is also evident in fanning the flames of discontent.

## IX

This brief review of the current situation in the tribal areas of Bihar brings out in bold relief the maladies ailing Chotanagpur. These fall into four clusters, *viz.* economic, administrative, socio-psychological and political. The tribal problem will have to be tackled at the same time on all the four fronts. Since the problems are all interlinked, some of the remedies suggested would touch upon more than one cluster.

The Chotanagpur Tenancy Act has been amended in 1969 and together with the Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation 1969, it will go a long way towards solving the twin problems of land alienation and indebtedness on long as well as short-term basis. This is the first time in Bihar that the special powers vested in the Governor under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution "for the peace and good government of a scheduled area" have been invoked to protect the tribals from certain kinds of exploitation. The existing restrictions on the tribals for obtaining institutional credit for agricultural improvement have been liberalized. For reasons of space it is not possible here to detail the reforms necessary in the economic field. It is however necessary to emphasize that adequate irrigation facilities must be given a priority, the schemes for economic development should be more realistic and take into account the human and material resources involved and provision must be made for making credit available to tribal people for both productive and non-productive expenditure swiftly.

In all sectors of economic development a mechanism should be devised through which funds meant for tribals should be used for their betterment only. Even among the tribals greater attention may be paid to very backward tribals like the Birhor, Asur, Birjia, Maler, etc. who are the weakest links in the whole chain. The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Tribes had drawn pointed attention to the fact that it is not only the plainsman who exploit the tribals. In many areas stronger and more advanced tribals freely

exploit their own folk. At the foot of the Neterhat plateau in Ranchi district the Oraon exploit the Birhor, in Tamar the high class Munda landholders oppress the poorer sections while in Kolhan, the Manki-Munda combine feed fat on the Parja. Thus it is necessary to end all forms of exploitation, irrespective of the agency responsible for it. It is imperative that the weaker sections among the tribals should be given preferential treatment. This would also meet the persistent demand of the majority of the non-Christians tribals who are clamouring for a greater share in the loans, grants and subsidies given by the government. In the field of education also, greater attention should be paid to the non-Christians as the Christians have already got into the education habit.

In the matter of employment government should be more strict in enforcing the percentages prescribed in the public sector and also in the private sector wherever possible. Efforts should also be made to promote the employment potential of tribals by giving them technical training.

No effort for tribal welfare can succeed fully unless the administration in the tribal areas is streamlined. As far as possible, at the lower levels of the administration, tribals may be employed as they have local knowledge and enjoy the confidence of the people. At the policy making and higher levels of implementation the multiplicity of agencies dealing in tribal welfare should be eliminated. All welfare and development in tribal areas should be under the control of the Tribal Welfare development. The department itself may have to be strengthened with the addition of a Directorate.

The Regional Board of Planning and Development of Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas should be reorganized and given more powers of superintendence, direction and control over all development activities in that area. The new Chief Minister of Bihar has already initiated action in this regard.

Through these means confidence will be created in the minds of the tribals about the intentions of the government. The officers sent to implement the schemes of development should be persons with a fund of patience goodwill and sympathy. It is something more than mere administration which people in Chotanagpur need today.

On the socio-psychological level special efforts should be made to stress the solidarity between tribals and the rest of the population. The missionary approach which emphasized the differences should be discarded. This new approach involves a two-way traffic, greater knowledge of and participation in tribal life by non-tribals and vice-versa. All notions of cultural superiority of the non-tribal way of life should be given up and due deference must be made for things or values which the tribals hold dear. Once the fear of suppression of tribal culture is dispelled, the two communities would come close to each other.



The Autonomous Regional Board which is going to be formed would satisfy to some extent the political aspirations of the tribals for autonomy and greater participation in the government. It is recognized that the demand for a separate state of Jharkhand does not hold much water. The example of the hill areas in Assam cannot be held up for Chotanagpur as in the former the tribals are in preponderant majority. In Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas only one-third of the population is tribal. Out of 79 legislators who won seats in the Bihar Legislative Assembly from these six districts in 1969 only 18 are avowedly for Jharkhand, the others being opposed to it. Thus only 23% of the legislators in that area support the demand. Evidently Jharkhand cannot be imposed on 77% of the legislators against their will. When this realization spreads to the masses, it is likely that a more class or ideology-oriented political consciousness will emerge which will fall in line with the regional pattern.

Even with all this absolute peace may not come to tribal Bihar. There is unrest everywhere, among labour, students, professional classes, etc. Chotanagpur will have a due share of these, but it will no longer be tribal unrest and no more will an assessment of tribal situation be needed.

# The Tribal Situation in Orissa

NITYANANDA DAS

Orissa occupies a special position in the tribal map of India. Barring the State of Nagaland, Orissa has the largest percentage of tribals, which is 24.7 of the total population. According to 1961 census there are 42,23,757 tribals out of 17,548,846 people in the State. In the President's order of 1956, 62 groups were scheduled as tribes. 22,095 square miles out of the total area of 6,171,79 square miles constitute the scheduled area, which is 46.8% of the area of the State, and the Scheduled Tribes consist of 23,92,056 out of 39,50,752 or 60.65% of the total population. The Scheduled Tribes are distributed in almost all the districts including those in the coastal belt. The analysis of census data shows that the tribes such as Juang, Gadaba, Poroja, Bonda, Koya, etc. live in compact areas, while the Saora, Kandh, Gond and Bhuinya have a wide distribution in different districts.

Out of 62 tribes nearly 25 tribes speak their own language. They are divided into the Mundari group of the Austric family and the South-Dravidian sub-group of the Dravidian family. None of these tribal languages has any script. Some of them have a well-established grammar. The variation in the same family, as among the Saora and the Juang is so wide that it becomes difficult to determine the affinity, even though they belong to the Mundari group. Similarly *Kui* and *Kui'* spoken by various sections of the Kandha tribe vary widely from the *Koya* which belongs to the same Dravidian family. The Gadaba and Bonda speak *Gutob* while a section of the tribe Olari speak a language belonging to the Dravidian family.

## SOCIO-ECONOMIC GRADATION

The tribes of Orissa share different social, economic and cultural situations. On the one hand there are backward groups practising cultivating shifting such as the Kutia Kandh, Bonda, Hill Juang and Paudi Bhuinya. On the other hand, there are 'assimilated' groups who are indistinguishable from the general rural population of the country. Between these two extreme situations there are various groups of tribals who are in transitional stages. Impact of industry, mining and hydro-electric projects have influenced tribal groups to a considerable degree. Conversion to Christianity and Hinduism have also played their role in transforming the socio-cultural life

of the tribals. Thus in Orissa one could come across different stages of social and economic growth, which the various tribes exhibit in their day-to-day life. It will not be an exaggeration to say that Orissa is the variegated storehouse of the tribes. Here Kharias and Birhors in mountain fastness are eking over their life by collectional and food gathering economy. The giant steel plant at Rourkela, the mining complex of Sundergarh, Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar have transformed the entire life process of the tribes. In this background it is significant that the tribes of Orissa could throw a considerable light on the cultural configuration and social inter-relationship over a wide area.

#### PHYSICAL ASPECTS

Though the bulk of the tribes belong to the proto-australoid group, yet incipient Mongoloid feature is noticeable among the Gadabas and Saoras. The tribes living in northern parts of Orissa are in contiguity with those in the Chotanagpur plateau and the adjoining parts of Madhya Pradesh. The Santals of Mayurbhanj extend through Singhbhum district up to Santal Paragana and North Bengal. Gonds and Bhattadas are in contiguity to the same tribes of Madhya Pradesh. On the other hand there are tribes in South Orissa who are spread over adjoining areas of Bastar and Andhra Pradesh; there are some groups like Bondas, Didayis, Juangs who are confined to this State.

#### SAFEGUARDS: PAST AND PRESENT

In the past the tribal people of Kalinga were a significant group. Emperor Asoka subjugated them but simultaneously inscribed safeguards for them. For the first time in the recorded history Asokan rock edict at Dhauli near Bhubaneswar ordered administrators to administer the jungle folk with sympathy and compassion according to their customs and traditions. In this background we have to analyse the situation of Orissan tribes in relation to the other tribal areas, particularly the border tribes.

In the Puranas it is mentioned that the tribes were living in the thickly wooded impassible tracts of Jharkhand. The pre-historic findings in Mayurbhanj and those found recently around Kharligarh in Bolangir district have shown that the existence of man in Orissa is of considerable antiquity. Correlation of the contemporary tribal people with those of ancient tools and techniques is being worked out. Certain customs, which are being observed even now by some of the former ruling chiefs of erstwhile native States of Orissa, clearly indicate that these rulers who are now Khatrias had their origin from the tribes. The Raja at the time of coronation has to rever a particular tribeman to sanctify the celebrations. There are legends to connect these ruling families with various tribes. The Maharaja of Patna and Kalahandi have the

origin from the Khonds while those of Dhenkanal had a mooring with the Saoras. No doubt inter-tribal disputes and constant warfare broke down the tribal kingdom and they were ultimately subjugated by advanced groups. During the Mughal rule the tribal people were not disturbed and were left to their own habitat. Mughal Emperor Akbar in a *firman* instructed his commanders and governors not to disturb the tribal people.

After the advent of the British there began an infiltration by plainsmen into tribal areas. With the opening of communication and expansion of British dominion across the hills the plainsmen who were afraid of the unhealthy forests and hills started migrating there. From then onward there developed the process of cultural contact with the tribals. The relationship of tribals and some non-tribal groups grew up in various directions.

Some of the effects were healthier for the tribals, while the others were not so. The State of Orissa provides a wonderful field for study of this aspect. An untouchable caste, the Dom and Pano, the first non-tribal caste to settle down on the hills, live in intimate relationship with the Kandhs and Saoras of South Orissa. Similarly milkmen, oilmen and others live with the Juangs and Paudi Bhuiyas of North Orissa. The Tribal Research Bureau conducted surveys and studies to analyse this relationship. It has often been highlighted that the non-tribals who settled down on the hills have been agencies of ruthless exploitation and have drained the life and blood of the tribals. They have been described as parasites whose exploits could make "St. Augustine stand and gasp". The studies have shown that in spite of all these years of persuasions and acrimonious propaganda the relationship of tribal groups with those non-tribals have not been snapped. The development and block agencies and the non-official social workers who are actively working among the tribals after independence have not been successful in eradicating these parasites. The simple reason being the relationship is not one of parasitism but is one of symbiosis. At the time of adversity, particularly during the lean months when the tribals face considerable difficulty, these groups actually help the tribesmen. At time of the visit of the officials or when exactions of *Mutta* heads and petty official tormented tribes these Doms and Panos were at hand to help them. They came as weavers to the hills. In course of time they became petty traders catering to the needs of the tribals. The tribals whose customs did not include carrying their own produce to the market depend on these middlemen and traders. On the other hand liquor venders or government agents who went to tribal areas were only interested to further their own interests. As such the tribals were more awe stricken by them. There could be hardly any common tie. Officials, whether high or low, who visit tribal areas want to introduce measures according to certain stereotyped pattern which could not catch the imagination of the tribals.



## TRIBAL UNREST

Tribal revolts in Orissa have been many since the beginning of the 19th century. The Koyas of Malkangiri in the erstwhile Madras Presidency rose against the administration in 1879 and 1880. Kandhs of Phulbani rose in revolt under the leadership of Chakra Bissoyi in 1850. Being oppressed by the Mutta heads Saoras rose twice in 1890 and 1940. Bhuiyas and Juangs of Keonjhar were equally vociferous against the native chiefs. All these events go to show that the tribals resisted the alien rulers who overlooked their own traditions and felt needs. These uprisings were suppressed by force.

Our constitution embodied various safeguards for the tribes. Gandhiji and Thakkar Bapa worked for the improvement of tribes in the interest of national integration. The Directives of the State Policy stipulate special provisions for the tribes. In fact the entire nation was placed in the position of trustee and the tribesmen were made the *cesti qui trust*. Nevertheless, we have overlooked the hardships faced by the tribals.

Recent tribal upheavals in parts of Andhra Pradesh bordering Orissa have shown that tribals who have openly broken the law, understood very little of individual ownership *versus* public ownership, private enterprise *versus* socialism. They understood only one point, that is, that most of their land have been under the possession of non-tribals before a few years. Prospects of shifting cultivation were curbed by forest regulations. Economic life has not improved. Contact with urban centres changed their world-view and the level of their aspirations. They found that redress through normal official channels has not been possible during all these years. In spite of the launching of development programme and the visits by officials, their lot has not improved. At the time of such mounting frustration any agent provocateur could incite them to take law into their own hands. Had the traditional leadership been able to hold them as before, the results would have been different. But there is no leadership worth the name.

The Forest Policy Regulation (1952) drastically cut down the rights of the tribals in the forests. Forest was taken as national wealth and was to run on a commercial line. But the policy regulation overlooked the very existence of those groups of people who have been living for centuries in the forest. The tribals are so intimately associated with forest that their fairs and festivals, social and economic life revolve around it. Committees and commissions constituted by Central and State governments after independence have universally dwelt on this relationship and that forest administration and existing regulations have deplorably overlooked the interests of the tribals.

## SHIFTING CULTIVATION

Shifting cultivation is an age-old institution among tribes. Even the proficient agriculturists like the Lanjia Saoras, who build superb terraces on hill slopes are more skilful than the Angamis and they grew to crops of paddy long before the *tai chung* was introduced in this country practise shifting cultivation. This is so because millets, pulses, oilseeds, etc. are better grown on the hill clearings than elsewhere. If they stop slash and burn methods of cultivation they will be deprived of these crops. Secondly, most of the wet land have passed hands from tribals to non-tribals. After the establishment of the British rule regulations such as the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act and the Agency Tract interest and Land Transfer Act (of Madras) were enacted. But these have not prevented the transfer of tribal land. The tribals give themselves up to a number of temptations and surreptitiously mortgage land by oral agreement. The non-tribals enjoy undisputed possession for a considerable period before they establish ownership by adverse possession. A study conducted by Tribal Research Bureau has shown that very recently, even after 20 years of independence, several non-tribals have purchased tribal lands around the MIG factory in Koraput, in collusion with the local revenue officials.

It is not worthwhile insisting on the tribals giving up their shifting cultivation, as it is a way of life for them. A former Inspector General of Forests has stated that

the nation widely held that shifting cultivation is responsible in the main for large-scale soil erosion needs to be effectively dispelled. The correct approach to the problem of shifting cultivation lies in accepting it not as a necessary evil, but recognising it as a way of life; not condemning it as an evil practice but regarding it as an agricultural practice evolved as a reflex to the physiographical character of land. For too long, jhuming has been condemned out of hand as a curse to be ashamed of, a vandalism to be decried. This attitude engenders an inferiority complex and unhealthy atmosphere for the launching of any development scheme seeking to improve the current practice.

We have to accept that shifting cultivation is an essential and unavoidable way of life for several million people. In Orissa about six lakhs of tribals practise this style of cultivation. An interesting feature noticed among the Kandhs of Belghar was a counter-move by some settled agriculturists to switch over to shifting cultivation. In Nagaland, a similar process was noticed a few years ago. This repudiates the established theory of social evolution and it confirms that a pragmatic functional adjustment is more significant than any dogmatic presumption.

## INDEBTEDNESS

Indebtedness among tribals is a chronic malady. Opening of industries and introduction of innovations and communications has changed social values. All these have created imbalances. There were proposals to liquidate past debts; these have yet to take effect. The tribals have been exploited in new ways. Some exploiters have come up from within the tribe. The latter category expose the tribals to a much wider predicament. No effective legislation has been enacted in any State either under general legislative power of the state or under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution. Under the existing system there could hardly be any effective control of moneylending in tribal areas. In Orissa the Lanjia Saoras of Ganjam and Koraput pledge most of their produce and fruit trees to the Dom middlemen during lean months against advances for meeting day-to-day expenses, and for procuring sacrificial animals to propitiate ancestors and gods. Hence during harvest, the Saoras who practise both shifting and wet cultivation begin a year with a debit balance. Similarly, the Kutia and Dangaria Kandhs sell their produce at a much cheaper rate to Dom middlemen against outstanding advances. Until this system worked, the symbiotic balance of tribesmen and Doms used to be maintained. But once 'outside involvement' came into play with moneylenders and traders from plains advancing to the tribal tracts either directly, or through the Dom middlemen, a wider range of exploitation ensued and this broke down the traditional pattern of economic life. The state government has introduced a purchase-sale scheme in certain backward tribal areas for last four years. The object of the scheme is to effect the economic development of backward tribes and to save them from exploitation. Interest free loans were advanced to tribals without sureties to clear up all their outstanding debts. Their produce is accounted for towards the advance not exceeding 50% of the price of the commodities. Tribals could buy their foodstuffs, clothes, tobacco, etc. from fair price shops.

A study conducted by Tribal Research Bureau in some areas has shown that after certain amount of initial success, the scheme has bogged down in bureaucratic red-tape. The original purpose of the scheme, viz. saving the tribals from the exploitation is lost sight of. Maintenance of balance sheets, observance of Civil Accounts Code take most of the time of the staff. Sometimes unscrupulous incumbents play on the ignorance of the tribals to gain personal advantage. The fair price shops store unnecessary articles, and the rates are pretty high. Tribals lost interest in the scheme, which was also sabotaged by the traders and middlemen. The system ignored the basic human frailties, while on the other occasions it landed in enormous technicalities. This instance is given to show how a useful and good programme loses its significance. If this scheme did not succeed no other development programme including tribal development blocks fared better. Social scientists, who have conducted applied studies have found that the schemes drawn up without

taking into consideration the felt needs of the tribals could not catch the imagination of the tribals.

#### LEADERSHIP

Here it becomes significant to analyse the leadership pattern in tribal areas by the leaders. Among the tribes there was organized political life with spatial delimitation. There are both secular and religious functionaries to administer and arbitrate on various issues. A *shaman*, a sorcerer, a witch-doctor have their hold on tribals both on sacred and profane ambits. A leader, either elected or selected, worked in the interest of the community. A Gamang of the Saoras or a Saonta of the Kandhs or a Sardar of the Juangs and the Bhuiyans has his authority over the tribemen, till he does not deviate from the traditional prescriptions. No doubt sometimes some of the leaders transform themselves as arbitrary rulers. But there is always a check on the growth of such propensity.

On the other hand the electoral system based on adult franchise introduced in almost all the tribal areas produced new leaders on a totally different perspective. A study undertaken to show the impact of Panchayati Raj in backward tribal areas has shown that Lanjia Saoras hardly understood the significance of electoral system and values of ballot paper. Even when some persons were nominated as Panchayat members and office bearers from among them, they quickly resigned their posts. The picture was not very much different in case of advanced Santals. A study has shown that Santals showed general apathy to nominations or elections to Panchayats. Influential landlords or moneylenders mostly contested, and those who could capture a larger clientele were elected. The higher values of electoral preference and importance were lost sight of. If Panchayat elections gave this dismal picture, Assembly or Parliament elections did not indicate anything better. The electorate hardly understood party affiliations or higher policies enunciated by the candidates. The percentage of polling is usually low. This apathy is noticed in reserved constituencies for Scheduled Tribes. Hence elected representatives are neither leaders, nor their words carry much weight in deciding tribal issues. Interestingly the elected persons have little contact with tribals. More often advanced sections of tribals occupy all the important positions. Most of the tribals are, therefore, in a transitional phase, where the traditional leadership has lost its hold and the elected leadership is yet to establish itself. This vacuum on many occasions is taken advantage of by certain elements who create troubles. Sometimes leaders of Jharkhand movement are non-tribals. They incite tribals to take law into their own hands. Demand for separate states is coming in from 'interior tribes' line of border groups.

In this background tribal situation in Orissa could be viewed with interest not by social scientists alone, but also by administrators, social workers and political leaders, both tribals and non-tribals. For—last two decades



anthropologists have advised on tribal problems. Their approach has often been misinterpreted to mean that they are trying to keep the tribes receded from progress and preserve them as museum places.

#### EDUCATION

There has been a steady rise in the level of education among some of the tribes. Establishment of residential schools, known as the Ashram Schools, with vocational bias has given a fillip to the spread of education. Award of stipends and scholarships in higher stages, and supply of reading and writing material at lower level, have enabled tribals to education. The picture however is not encouraging among really backward tribes, who have their distinct languages. The percentage of literacy is still low among them. These groups have their 'dormitory' institution to impart training in social discipline and recreation. Modern institutions and sources of entertainment are no substitute for them. Single-teacher schools suffer from a number of handicaps which need rectification. Tribal education has been a debatable issue, and a clear-cut policy is required for this purpose.

Education among the tribals was based on a continuation of discipline and practical training. The formal education, now being introduced, has produced a significant impact on the tribes. Discipline and training has suffered a setback. Dormitory institution, which is still prevalent among different tribes, shows how well organized and effective this institution has been to provide education and training to the youth. This is decaying now. The tribals turn to movies and alcoholism. Sex offences and delinquencies, unknown among the tribals, are now on the increase. In the communal riots in Rourkela the tribals took to large-scale slaughter without any understanding of the communal disharmony due to the partition of the subcontinent. The widespread student unrest, and the pervading indiscipline in different walks of life have also made inroads into tribal life. The usual barrier which isolated tribals into certain extent has crumbled.

#### EPILOGUE

An objective appraisal of different tribal areas would show that in our over-enthusiasm we have caused much greater harm to the tribes. We have not redressed their grievances, but have imposed our will on their affairs in such a manner that tribals are fast losing their confidence in the present order. Social workers sermonise in a manner that offend the tribals. Administrators of different denominations want to shape things according to their own preference. They achieve little and make the tribals apathetic to various programmes. Elwin's *Philosophy for NEFA* was distributed to all top officers all over the country. But can we say that any one has given serious thought to

the prescriptions embodied in that book? Similarly, nine tribal research bodies established in states having sizable tribal population have not been called upon to help in formulating plan and programme for tribes according to their felt needs. The reports and findings of these bodies deserve greater attention to tackle tribal situation.

The Constitution empowers the Centre to issue directives to the states for the development of tribes, which is a state subject. No such directive has been issued to check exploitation, moneylending or transfer of land. Similarly, special powers of the State Governors to promulgate regulations on these subjects have seldom been exercised.

It is, therefore, imperative that social scientists, administrators and leaders should seriously deliberate to prepare a comprehensive guideline for the progress of tribes on right lines, so that parochial feelings do not jeopardise national integration.

# Central Indian Tribes: A Historical Dimension

SUDHIBHUSHAN BHATTACHARYA

Central India may be defined as the area that surrounds the Amaravati-Nagpur-Raipur valley. This area is full of inhospitable rugged territories and impenetrable primeval forests. The nearly continuous chains of the Vindhya mountains which run along the Narmada river and extend in the east as far as Bihar, is in its north. The extensive plateau lying between the Kalahandi district of Orissa and the Chanda district of Maharashtra and including almost the entire portion of the districts of Koraput in Orissa and Bastar in Madhya Pradesh, lies in its south. The hilly tracts of Buldana and Burhanpur lie in its west, and the hills and forests of central Orissa in its east. A large number of primitive tribes are found teeming in this vast central belt. We propose to call them the Central Indian tribes.

In order to have a full perspective of the problems of the aboriginal population of this area, we may at first try to have a glimpse of its hoary past. The Aryan invaders established themselves firmly in the region of the Gangetic Doab towards the latter part of the Vedic period. The Vindhya territories which now fall within central India became thus bordering region for the Aryans of the Midland region where the centre of Aryan culture shifted during the latter part of the Vedic age. The clash of Aryan culture with the indigenous aboriginal cultures, which started with the entry of the Vedic invaders into this subcontinent, appears to have become more acute in this inland region. There are clear indications of this clash in our ancient texts of that period. In the *Āitareya Brahmana* and some other old texts the Andhra, Pundra, 'Sabara, Pulinda and Mutiba have been mentioned as outcasts living beyond the border lands (*udantah*). These aboriginal peoples caused some headache to the Midland Aryans. Four culture zones, viz. the *Pracya* (east), *Daksina* (south, comprising the Vindhya region and the Indian territories south to it), *Praticya* (west) and *udicya* (north-west) to be found around the central Aryan zone, have also been mentioned in the same *Brahmana*.

The bulk migration of the Aryans stopped with their arrival in this midland country. It is found in the literature of this period that they feared and disliked the peoples who lived beyond their frontiers. This attitude is found reflected in the *Baudhavana Dharmasutra* in which the peoples named

Avanti, Anga, Magadha, Saurashtra and some others living in the outlying regions have been described as *sankuma-yoni*, i.e. men of heterogenous or impure birth and culture. Purificatory rites have been prescribed for Aryans entering those territories. In the *Satapatha Brahmana* the barbarians in speech of the Asuras have been mentioned which were to be avoided. These are some of the references to the aboriginal population which are to be found in the literature of that period indicative of a clash between two distinct cultures.

We will now try to follow the history of the relationship between the Aryans and the aborigines in the subsequent period in this region and elsewhere in India, for we can get important clues for a solution of our present problems from the course of history. We have mentioned that the bulk-migration of the Aryans came to a stop with their occupation of the Midland region. From here the Vedic people gradually infiltrated into the remaining parts of the Indian subcontinent, and in course of a few centuries colonies of the Vedic Aryans grew all over the country giving rise to the idea of *ekarat* (one-India) in the minds of the ancient Indian kings. The stiff attitude of the Vedic invaders shown in the beginning towards the pre-Aryan population of India gradually softened, which becomes clear from our literature of the subsequent period. In the *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the early Buddhist and Jaina texts we find signs of intimate contacts of the Midland region with peoples and places outside it. For example, a vivid description of the life in Janasthana (i.e. the Vindya region) and Dandaka (i.e. the modern Bastar-Koraput plateau) is found in the *Ramayana*. But the idea of the four zones lying outside the central Aryan region, in its east, south, west and north-west, persisted yet.

It was from the lists of the Janapadas to be found in the different Puranas and Sanskrit texts of the Puranic period that the existence of a large number of zones comes to light. Some scholars have made out seven zones from these lists, each of them consisting of a number of social and cultural groups. These seven zones are: (1) Madhyadesa (the midland which was then the centre of pure Aryan culture), (2) Pracya (east), (3) Dakṣiṇatyā (far south), (4) Vindhya-prathā (near south, i.e. the Vindhya region), (5) Aparanta or Pascaddesa (west), and (7) Parvatasraya (Himalayan region).

The Puranic lists of the ethnic groups of people living in these regions show names of all types of people, Aryan and non-Aryan. The sharp line by which we now try to divide the tribes and castes of India appears to have been absent in those days. For example, the peoples of the Vindhya-prstha region are, Malada (a Vindhya community, probably a tribe in the modern anthropological sense), Karusa (of central Bihar), Mekala (people of the Maikal range in the Amarkantak region), Utkala (people of the Midnapur-Balasore region), Kishandhaka (people of Kiskindhya), Tosala (of the Puri-Cuttack region), Dasrana (people of the modern Bhilsa region), Bhoja



(probably of the Berar region), Daksina-Kossala (of the Bilaspur-Raipur-Sambalpur region), Nisadha (probably of the western Vindhya) etc. Here the forest peoples, namely Nisadha, Mekala, Kiskandhaka and Malada, have been grouped together with the Tosala, Daksina-Kosala, Dasama and others.

The seven zones described in the Puranas are only rough estimates. For the reasons stated below we wish to expand the Puranic Vindhya-prstha area by including in it those Daksinatya territories that were inhabited by the Sahara, Pullinda, Vindhya-Mauleya, Dandaka and Nala in ancient times, to form the central Indian region demarcated by us.

The foremost reason for our treating this region as a separate zone, particularly a separate tribal zone, is that this area has preserved a large number of important non-Aryan languages spoken by different tribal groups. None of the tribes of Western India speaks a non-Aryan speech now. As regards the South Indian tribes, very few of them have retained intact the core part of their original speech. But the picture in the Central Indian tribal region is quite different because most of the tribes of this area speak their non-Aryan tongues well, in spite of the presence of an age-old bilingualism in them, and also a recent trend towards a greater dependence on the regional Indo-Aryan speeches. Secondly, this Central Indian region has nurtured from pre-modern times a large number of Dravidian languages which share some common features among them in contradistinction to the Southern Dravidian languages, and also the Northern Dravidian languages (i.e. Kurukh, Malto and Brahui). The third reason is that this area has also given shelter to a large number of tribes speaking languages of the Austro-asiatic (i.e. Munda) group. All the reasons put forth above are linguistic ones, coming as they do from a student of linguistics. But we know that language is a vehicle of culture. So the linguistic composition and diversity to be found in this area might also speak to some extent for the cultural situation in this region.

Let us summarise here the points we have tried to make in the foregoing short historical survey. We have seen that at the time of the *Brahmanas* this Central India was a bordering area, and that the Midland Aryans of the Gangetic Doab were for some time apprehensive of the aboriginal peoples living on the other sides of the frontiers. What is more important for our present discussion is that this area still continues to be a bordering region both for the north and the south of the Indian subcontinent, centrally situated as it is between the two big Indian zones that offer striking contrasts in racial characters, languages and social institutions. The other point we have sought to make above is that a tolerant infiltration and colonisation of the Aryan settlers in these outlying areas paid rich dividends in the long run than the earlier coercive methods of social ostracism and vituperation. The early Vedic settlers seem to have possessed a mixed culture which is evident from the existence of different trends of thoughts and different types of organizations in the Vedas. This Vedic culture became more varied gradually

by absorbing more and more items from the cultures of the pre-Aryan population.

It has also been stressed above that the modern 19th century concepts of Indian "tribes" and "castes" were unknown in those days. It may be added here that Manu, who supplied the distinguishing profile of the Hindu society of his time, and the other *dharmasutra*-karas did not disown the aboriginal communities and forest peoples, but considered them as offshoots of the four Hindu castes, originating through their unlawful, non-endogamous, *anuloma* and *pratiloma* marriages (i.e. born of a Brahmin father and Sudra mother, of a Sudra father and a Brahmin mother, and so on). The ancient Hindu philosophers who propounded the fundamental doctrines of *Karma* (Action) and Rebirth, did not either consider them as altogether outside the pale of Hindu civilization, for according to them a Candala can also be born in a Brahmin family by dint of persistent lawful and virtuous action, while, reversely, a Brahmin can be born in a Candala family by persistent unlawful and sinful acts.

Let me dilate on this point a little. Manu and others, instead of speaking of a four-tier Hindu society, actually spoke of a five-tier Hindu society consisting of the four castes and a fifth one which was called in the earlier text as the *sankhina-yoni*, and in the later texts by various names, *vama-sankara*, *sankara-jati*, and so on. We may say that the ancient society fathers of India grouped the aboriginal communities they knew about in their times under this fifth category. I wish to make another observation in this connection. It appears that this five-tier Hindu society of Manu ceased to exist long ago. What we generally find now-a-days in most parts of India is a two-tier Hindu society, and these two broad groups are made of the higher castes and the lower castes. There are, of course, several grades under these two categories, their number varying from region to region. My humble submission before this learned gathering is that in whichever tribal area I have worked, I have found most of the tribes being considered as "low castes". This baneful distinction between the high and the low castes must be removed from our society, and elaborate social education and other suitable arrangements are needed for the achievement of this goal. Political solution alone will lead to more political complications.

This historical stance is important in our present context, for if we admit that the aboriginal peoples of India are an integrated part of our society, then the question of integrating them again becomes superfluous.

It should, however, be emphasized here that social backwardness is not the main problem for the majority of the tribal population of central India. It is the educated and economically solvent tribals who resent, and justifiably so, being treated as low castes or depressed classes. The percentage of educated or prosperous people among the tribals of central India is very low. It is almost negligible outside Ranchi and Mandia districts. The large majority of

the aboriginal population of Central India who live away from the towns in the forests and rural areas, as far as we have seen, do not bother whether they are considered as untouchables by the caste Hindus or not. Most of these tribes have their own social hierarchies, and very rigid ones, in which the upper caste Hindus either have no place, or have a rather low place.

As regards the vast majority of these Central Indian aborigines, what is a greater reality with them is their spalling poverty, and their helplessness against the exploitation which they have been suffering at the hands of the clever people of all castes and creeds living around them. It is a pity that we sometimes fail to realize their real problems, and sometimes we fail to give them any real protection or help due to our lack of imagination, or due to the slackness in our administration. We must realize that on account of their long association with the primeval forests, the food-gatherers' instinct is still dominant in most of them. The masses among these people are still much inclined to the produces of land, its tubers, fruits and the crops produced by them adopting their traditional crude methods. But, curiously enough, we want them to work as labourers in the tea gardens, large-scale countryside dams and industries, in the construction of forest roads, and so on and so forth.

What I mean here is this that the ancient Hindu society fathers determined the occupations of the different incoming new groups by saying, you and your descendants do this work and be useful to the society, you and your descendants do that work and be useful to the society, and so on. They also said, we are giving you the social sanction and assurance that nobody will be able to dislodge your descendants from these occupations. In this way so many occupational caste-groups grew in India in course of time. We may guess that similar gestures were also made by them to the forest peoples whom the society fathers came across. But it is likely that these occupations, they must have been unsatisfactory and low enough, were discarded by those proud foresters who preferred to stick to their own independent economy. Our ancient society fathers being misled by a psychology which is the natural psychology of the dominant groups all over the world, committed an error. But we should not commit the same error now by asking these people to work as our labourers and accept a Sudraship at long last taking advantage of their poverty.

There is still some vagueness about the concept of tribal integration. Let us examine its theoretical base. The theory of a gradual Aryanization was certainly a brilliant discovery of the 19th century. If this be the basis of our thinking on tribal integration, then I have a feeling that we should now pull out ourselves from the rut of this old theory, so far as the governmental policies are concerned. Let me make this point clear. The changes in a society and culture are bound to come. It is an important subject studied by the social scientists. Let the social scientists take care of it. If the government find that some groups of people are not moving in the direction we wish them to do, they (i.e. the government) may change their policy. A complete integration is

neither always possible, nor is an ideal solution for a country like India where every one has been allowed the right to live his traditional life.

Let us stress again that it is the extreme poverty of the masses of the aboriginal population of central India that has so long kept them outside the main stream of our life, that has deprived them of the benefits of the development and progress in our national India. We will have to seek other practical remedies to redress it. We have an urgent duty towards them not because they are the *adivasis* or the original inhabitants of this land, but because they are an age-old minority whom we have reduced to a state of chill penury.



# Western and Eastern Deccan Tribes

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Two problems have defied solution so far. One of them is the accepted definition of a tribe and the other is about the location of their original habitat. To take the second first, it is not correct to call the tribal as indigenous people of India, as the tribes have been known to be in Latin America or elsewhere. The terms used for the tribes such as 'Adivasi', 'Adimjati' are to some extent a misnomer, though the terms 'Vanyajati', 'Girjan', 'Raniparag' are useful for identifying the tribes who still live in hilly or forest areas which are inaccessible. Fortunately, it has no colour connotation as Negrito tribes have, not a caste distinction such as the Harijans (Scheduled) Castes have.

Hunter defined the 'Tribe' as a 'well organised social structure where human group lives in defined physical environment'. His definition suggests that a tribe normally claims descent from a common ancestor living in a defined territory, has a common history, speaks a common dialect and is endogamous. But a tribe is different from a caste.

I have suggested a workable criterion for an ordinary man to distinguish a tribe from others as the following :

- (1) tribal origin,
- (2) primitive way of life,
- (3) habitation in remote and less accessible areas; and
- (4) general backwardness in all respects.

Dr. Guha, an eminent Indian anthropologist, in the Census Report of 1931 distinguishes three racial strains in the tribes of India:

- (1) Proto-Austroloid,
- (2) Negrito strain indicated by frizzy hair; and
- (3) the Mongoloid element such as is found in the Naga tribes.

Dr. Guha thinks that Negrito are the oldest of all and Proto-Austroloid came latter. Baron Von Eickstedt of the Breaslour (Germany) University, who visited India some years back, suggested three grouping as follows:

- (1) Weddist group (Ancient Indians),
- (2) Melanid group (Black Indians),
- (3) Indid group (New Indians).

The Weddist group is named after the very primitive Veddas of Ceylon, and it comprises the bulk of the aboriginals. The Oraons, Gonds and Khonds may belong to the subgroup of Gondid of the Weddist group. Panians, White Santals, Hos, Gaddabas and Panos belong to Kolid subgroup of Melenid group, and the Yanadin and Chenchues have an element of Melonid Group. These three elements relating to the Indian aboriginal belong to the three great continents divided up into a large number of tribes, all endogamous, each again split up into exogamous clans, many of them preserving their ancient totem names and customs to this day.

Thus it is well-nigh impossible to assert which tribes can be said to be indigenous, though they are the autochthons of India. India has been a country where continuous inflow of people from the neighbouring and even distant countries has been going on for centuries, and it is, so to say, a laboratory where the enriching process of interaction and fusion of cultures is going on apace.

There are altogether about 550 tribes and sub-tribes in different parts of India classified as 'Scheduled Tribes' in accordance with the revised schedule published in the Bill (The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes Orders Amending Bill No. 119 of 1967) drafted on the basis of the recommendations of the Report of the Advisory Committee of three members appointed by the Government of India (Department of Social Security) on 1st June 1965 and examined in consultation with State Governments, Union Territorial Administration, Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and Registrar General and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Members of Parliament.

The lists of Scheduled Tribes in different parts of India should be revised by a High Power Commission consisting of Anthropologists, Administrators, and Social Workers in the field and by members of the Legislatures. This should be based on a study of the conditions of the tribes and suggest such tribe to be scheduled as conform to their scientific scrutiny. Political consideration should not weigh with such a body, as the lists suggested in the pending Bill before Parliament seems to have been.

Physical anthropology will not serve our purpose satisfactorily for determining the tribal communities as it was found by blood test undertaken by late Dr. Majumdar among the Bhil population of Central India. It was discovered in the sample survey that there was very little of Tribal blood in the Bhils who have been enlisted as Scheduled Tribes.

The tribal people of India do not present a homogeneous ethnic stock. Linguistically, the tribes of India speak different languages and dialects and culturally they show distinctive pattern of life. They thus stand on a different level of development and even economically all the tribals cannot be considered on the same footing.

From the point of view of the process of assimilation, acculturation and

finally integration that is going on rapidly during recent years the tribals can be conveniently divided mainly into four divisions, according to Verrier Elwin, as follows:

The first is the most primitive tribe, living a communal life. Their tribal organisation is unimpaired. Geographical conditions have largely protected them from debasing contact of the plains. Hill Marias of Bastar (Madhya Pradesh), Junangs of Keojhar and Bondos of Malkangiri of Orissa. Shifting cultivation is their way of life; common club or dormitory is often an important factor in their social life.

The second category of tribals has begun to change in many small and subtle ways. Their village life is becoming individualist. Axe cultivation is more a habit than a part of their life. There is no taboo on the use of the plough.

The third class of tribals, which is most numerous (nearly 20 million out of the total tribal population of 30 million approximately, to be exact according to the 1961 Census 2,98,79,249) have come under the influence of external contact and are changing very rapidly losing their old customs and social organization.

Finally, the fourth class of tribals have completely assimilated with the rest of the people and can scarcely be differentiated from non tribals. They can be said to have won the battle of culture-contact. The division of the areas inhabited by the tribals in India, proposed for discussion at the seminar under the outline "Plan of Regional Distribution" does not fit in with any of the basic divisions described above. Broadly speaking there are three different zones in which the tribal people of India can be divided: (1) North Eastern Zone, (2) the Central Zone, and (3) the Southern Zone. Besides there are a few scattered pockets of tribals spread over the whole country.

I have selected to deal with the tribals in the following four states comprising the western and eastern Deccan tribes as suggested by the outline of 'Plan of the Seminar.'

None of the tribes can be classified into the most primitive tribes specified above. Most of the tribes belong to the class III which have come under the influence and external contact, changing very rapidly, losing their old customs and social organization, while a small section of these tribes in these four states being educated in schools and colleges have taken to the ways of life of the non-tribal neighbours and can scarcely be distinguished from others. Thus, this small section of tribes belong to class IV being completely assimilated and won or succumbed to the onslaught of outside culture. This change is worth studying.

Out of a total of 26 (Scheduled) tribes of Gujarat with a total population of 27,54,446 according to the 1961 Census, the Bhils, Dublas, Dhodias, Naikdas, Kunbis of the Dangs, Katkaris and Kotwalias deserve special

attention from the point of population and backwardness.

The Bhils with their sub-tribes number about 11,23,491 and are most ancient tribes referred to in many of the pre-historic literature. They are mostly agriculturists and they retain their lands in spite of exploitation because of the legislation of inalienable lands adopted by the government. But the lands of Bhils are of very poor quality and they suffer from want of or untimely rains. Their fields have no fencing, and dwelling huts are separated from one another and the revenue village of Bhils thus spreads over a circumference of two or three miles. This method of habitation makes it difficult to reach their doorsteps by all welfare and administrative agencies. The number of cattle owned by the Bhils is unmanageable and they can never be stallfed and they, therefore, are unproductive. Thus, they are labouring under the deficit economy of agriculture with a heavy burden of debts incurred for exorbitant marriage and death ceremonies. Since Independence, more schools have been started in these areas but the percentage of literacy is far below the average on account of wastage and stagnation. The most unfortunate fact is that the old generation of tribals who had very little faith in educating their children, specially the girls have the satisfaction of convincing their younger people of the futility of the present system of education, as the figures of the educated unemployed are rising every month.

The economic position of the tribals of Gujarat and Maharashtra states has considerably improved on account of the starting and successfully running of the cooperatives like the Forest Labour Cooperatives by the social workers and various welfare measures undertaken by the respective government for reducing exploitation of the tribals by landlords, money lenders, and contractors. The Tenancy Legislation has benefited the tribals by liquidating Talukdars and Inamdars and absentee landlords. The closing of liquor shops has made the lives of tribals of the two states happier and more comfortable than they were before. It should be admitted that illicit distillation of liquor is still going on.

The Dhodias and the Chowdharas have advanced considerably as they have come in constant touch with outside world and they were first to receive education in the boarding schools started by the enlightened ruler, the late Gaikwar of Baroda State, more than a hundred years back. They have become good agriculturists and some of them are serving as good schools teachers.

The tribals inhabiting the Dangs district of Gujarat known as Dangis or Kunbis numbering about 24,000 in the hilly area of over 300 villages were once small chieftains, recognized as such by the British Government. The Dang district has been specially demarcated as such, because it has very rich forest and substantial forest income. It was specially administered by a special officer as an agent of the Government of India. The forest income was set apart and this is still being continued. Though the rainfall is adequate, there is



scarcity of drinking water as the rain water rapidly flows down the hills, and the soil is unable to retain any. Annual Darbar is being held by the government and all the so-called tribal chiefs are presented with gifts. The forests of the Dangs district are now exploited departmentally and by contractors, the logging contract being given to Forest Labour Cooperatives.

The Dublas and Nayak or Nayakdas whose population in Gujarat State is 3,23,644 and 1,03,024 respectively are mostly landless labourers. The Dublas have to serve their landlords, known as their Dhaniyamas as bonded labour from sire to son. They had not even a small piece of land to build their huts for dwelling purposes and hence they occupy small huts on the land belonging to their landlords. After Independence, efforts have been made successfully to abolish this system of bonded labour of Dublas known as 'Hali' system. With the spread of education through the efforts of social workers, this semi slavish condition of Dublas has been put an end to.

It is an interesting subject for anthropologists and social scientists to explore how the Dubla tribe coming out of forest areas became slaves to the absentee landlord in the districts of Surat and Bulsar. Possibly, there was no other outlet for these people than to accept the Hali system of agricultural labour.

The Naiks or the Naikdas are a sort of nomadic tribe sometimes committing theft and robberies and leading unsettled lives. They are not as docile as the Dublas and even today they are able to create panic among the well-to-do people.

The Kotwalias are the poorest of the tribals though they are very small in number. They eke out their living by small cottage industries like basket making. They stand on the lowest rung of the ladder of social hierarchy.

In Maharashtra Bhils preponderate with a population of 5,75,022 out of the total of 23,97,159 tribals of 45 scheduled tribes in the whole state of Maharashtra. They are mostly in west Khandesh district. A sub section of Bhils known as Pawara Bhils inhabit the Satpura mountains and its valleys, administratively known as Akrani Mahal and Kathi State situated between the rivers Tapti and Narmada. This area though much accessible recently is out off for some days during the rainy season. There were tribal chiefs having their jurisdiction in their Hilly area adjoining Taloda Taluka. The agriculture of the area is progressing well on account of irrigation facilities provided by the Tribal Department Blocks covering the whole area. Besides the devoted Sarvodaya workers have contributed to the development of the area by organizing cooperatives for purchase of minor forest produce and sale of the daily requirements of the tribals after the whole of Akrani Mahals came under the Bhoodan movement and management, financial help coming forth from foreign agencies also.

The Kathodis or Katkaris are expert tribals in charcoal production. The cooperatives are started and managed successfully by social workers. The Katkaris have been liberated from the slavish yoke of the heartless contractors.

The Maria Gonds who inhabit the forest area of the Chanda district recently merged with Maharashtra State and adjoining the Bastar district of Madhya Pradesh have added to the problems of tribals, as some of the Maria Gonds have been carrying on shifting cultivation. The Maharashtra Government has undertaken schemes of settlements of these tribes for ending shifting cultivation which defies solution.

Mysore has 45 Scheduled Tribes with a population of 1,92,096. The most backward tribes are Kadu Kurubas, Jemi Kurubas, Irutigas and Koraeear as they live in forest and hilly regions.

# The Tribal Situation in Maharashtra

P.R. SIRSALKAR

## INTRODUCTION

The population of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra State, according to 1961 Census is 23.97 lakhs, which is 6.06% of the total population of the state and 7.96% of the population of Scheduled Tribes in India. Besides this population, there are 6.97 lakh tribals, residing outside the specified areas in Vidarbha, who are at present not treated as Scheduled Tribes in this state.

There are 53 communities included in the list of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra. The population of eight of these tribes, viz. Bhil, Mahadeo Koli and Gond, Warli, Kokna, Thakur, Kathodi or Katkari and Gamit is more than a lakh each. The population of these eight tribes together accounts for 82.65% of the total tribal population of the state. Eleven tribes have each a population of less than one lakh but more than 10,000. These tribes are Malhar Koli, Andh, Korku, Dhanka, Kolam, Pardhan, Pardhi, Dhoi Koli, Dubia, Dhodia and Naikda. Eleven tribes have a population of less than 100 each, while not a single person belonging to the 13 other tribes included in the Schedule was returned in 1961 Census.

The scheduled areas in Maharashtra are spread over seven districts and comprise 2,892 villages and 6 towns covering a total area of 7,270 sq. miles. The total population of the scheduled areas in Maharashtra is 11.6 lakhs to which the population of Scheduled Tribes is estimated at 8.22 lakhs which works out to 70.53% of the total population of the area.

The predominant tribal districts are Dhulia, Thana, Nasik, Yeotmal, Ahmadnagar, Chanda and Poona. The population of the Scheduled Tribes in the remaining districts is sparse.

## PROBLEMS OF TRIBAL EDUCATION

According to 1961 Census 7.2% of the total Scheduled Tribes population is literate. The literacy percentage of Scheduled Tribes males and females was 12.55 and 1.75 respectively as against 42.04 and 16.8 for the males and females of the general population in Maharashtra. These figures show that illiteracy among the tribals is still alarmingly high and would indicate the urgent need for undertaking bold educational programmes for the Scheduled Tribes.

The state government has made education of its people in general and backward classes in particular the sheet anchor of its progress because the social and economic integration of the backward classes with the rest of masses depends solely upon their educational development. In Maharashtra the tribals are exempted from payment of tuition fees and examination fees at all stages of education. A few meritorious among them who secure not less than 50% marks in the previous annual examination are also eligible to receive scholarships. Scheduled Tribes studying in post matric courses are awarded scholarships under the Government of India Scheme. During the Third Five Year Plan period an expenditure of Rs. 9.8 lakhs was incurred for award of scholarships to 1,754 Scheduled Tribe students and Rs. 2.15 lakhs on scholarships to tribals outside the specified areas.

A large portion of the outlay on the welfare of Scheduled Tribes in Maharashtra is utilized in providing hostel facilities to Scheduled Tribes students mainly through voluntary agencies. About 7,000 Scheduled Tribes boys and girls have been accommodated in the backward class hostels in the state. In the year 1968-69 there were 38 government hostels and 1,070 aided backward class hostels in Maharashtra.

With a view to create leadership and to work selflessly and devotedly in the tribal areas, the scheme of residential schools, i.e. Ashram Schools was introduced in the year 1953-54. Upto the end of the Third Five Year Plan, 37 Ashram Schools for Scheduled Tribes had been opened.

In spite of all these schemes of the government, it is observed that the progress of Scheduled Tribes in education is very slow compared to the Scheduled Castes in Maharashtra State. During the year 1967-68 an amount of Rs. 1,01,41,897 was sanctioned to 15,277 Scheduled Caste students whereas in the same year only 1,468 Scheduled Tribes students were sanctioned an amount of Rs. 8,42,247. From these figures of Government of India scholarships it is clear that the number of tribal pupils studying after post secondary school certificate courses is not satisfactory.

The problem of wastage and stagnation is very high among the Scheduled Tribe students at the primary and secondary stage of education. It has been observed that many boys and girls leave the schools as they cannot meet out the expenses of books and other articles.\* In Nasik district it is observed that at primary stage 68% of boys and 75% of girls could not proceed beyond Standard IV. In the secondary stage 60% of girls and 63% of boys could not proceed beyond Standard VII.

The problem of female education among the Scheduled Tribes is to be given top priority and does require special efforts on the part of the social workers and the government.

It has been generally experienced that the non-tribal teachers do not like

\*Report on Wastage and Stagnation in tribal education of the Scheduled area of Nasik District by T.R.I., Poona, 1968.



to serve in tribal areas due to various difficulties that they have to face in that area. It has also been experienced that single teacher primary schools are not functioning well in tribal areas.

All the Ashram Schools in Maharashtra State are managed by the voluntary agencies. There is an urgent need to improve the educational conditions of these residential schools.

The problem of medium of Instruction is very acute for the Madia Gonds of Chanda district. These pupils do not understand Marathi and as a result of it they cannot follow their teachers easily. Many teachers serving in this area cannot teach in Gondi. As a result of it the progress of Madia Gonds of Chanda district is far from satisfaction.

In many of the tribal areas the general holidays do not suit to the local conditions. Moreover the syllabus is also not framed according to their cultural environment. As a result of it many pupils leave the schools at various stages due to the disinterest in the studies.

The parents of the tribal pupils do not take interest in sending their wards to the schools. They feel that their children can assist them in their pursuits and thus their education is neglected.

In the field of tribal education there are problems of tribal pupils, parents and teachers and unless necessary efforts are made to solve these problems, there cannot be visible progress in the field of tribal education.

#### PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

About 60% of the tribals of the Maharashtra are workers and of them about 90% live on agriculture 52% as cultivators and 38% as agricultural labourers. About 77% of the tribals cultivating households own uneconomic holdings. Poor returns from lands have forced Scheduled Tribes to follow subsidiary occupations to supplement their income. Forest labour, hunting and food gathering, cutting of wood and its transportation, charcoal and catechu making are some of the occupations they adopt. Lack of skill and monetary resources act as drag on their efforts to improve their economic condition. Their simple and honest nature does not help them to withstand competition from their sophisticated neighbours. Unscrupulous traders and moneylenders tend to exploit them and reduce them to a state of serfdom. The tribals for one or the other reason are driven away from the best of the lands and in sheer desperation forced to withdraw themselves to inaccessible forests and hilly areas where the soil is barren and nature is harsh. They have therefore to put up to grim struggle for existence.

Efforts are being made by the state government to improve their economic conditions. On 15 February 1969 there were 461 Forest Labourers Co-operative Societies in the state. These societies provide work to the tribals to the extent of two three months in a year in the forest. Efforts are being made to eliminate the contractor from the forest coupes and to shoulder the

responsibility of managing these societies by the tribals. The main problems of these societies is to create efficient and honest tribal leadership to manage the working of these societies for the maximum benefit to be derived by the tribals. The non-tribals should guide the tribals in this endeavour, and ensure that the maximum benefit of this movement is accrued by the tribals. The Forest Labour Co-operative Societies should not be only forest cutting societies but these must function as forest raising societies.

At present there are 44 Tribal Development Blocks functioning in this state for the educational and economic development of the tribals. Efforts are being made to develop the area with a view to improve the conditions of the tribals. 49% of the tribal population of the state has been covered by these blocks. On the basis of\* field studies of Ambegaon, Dharni and Mulgi Tribal Development Blocks, it has been observed that a large amount has been spent on the constructional programmes and as a result of it the impact of the working of these blocks is not visible from the point of view of improvement in their economic and educational conditions. The real problem is that except the Tribal Development Funds, the expenditure from the General Development Fund seems to be negligible. As a result of it these areas cannot be developed with the limited resources.

Efforts are being made to provide drinking water and medical facilities through the Tribal Development Blocks. It is observed that in Primary Health Centres most of the grant is spent on the staff, quarters and the vehicle and very little amount is actually spent for medicines. There is an urgent need to give priority to the problem of drinking water and enough provision should be made for supply of free medicines to the tribals.

#### ADMINISTRATION

It is observed that in this state though funds are placed at the disposal of the Rural Development Department by the Social Welfare Department, the Director of Social Welfare is hardly consulted in these development programmes with a result it is seen that he has very little say in this matter. In fact the Director is said to be the co-ordinator for all the activities of the tribals but in practice it is seen that due to his multifarious activities of social welfare, he cannot function this role effectively.

There is no separate machinery in the Directorate of Social Welfare to give undivided attention to the problems of scheduled tribes of this state. As a result of it the problems of the Scheduled Tribes have hardly made any headway. This has resulted in unrest in some forest and hilly areas. If a separate machinery for their development is not created it may lead to strengthen the Naxalite elements in these areas.

\* Post extension survey of Tribal Development Block, Ambegaon, Dharni and Mulgi by the Tribal Research Institute, Poona, 1969.

### SUGGESTIONS

With a view to spread education among the tribals, it is suggested that from I to IV Standard each tribal pupil should be provided with slates, pencils, exercise books, books, etc. This will result in improving the standard of education and the poor tribal pupils will get the maximum benefit of this scheme.

As the single teacher primary schools do not function properly in tribal areas, it is suggested that one Ashram School for at least 10,000 tribal population may be considered.

Special provision for the construction of accommodation of two rooms for a teacher at each school may be made. With the accommodation facility the teacher will stay in the village and will concentrate on school in a better way.

Special schemes and incentives may be thought of for the speedy development of tribal female education.

Besides the Tribal Development Funds, at least to the extent of the percentage of tribal population, the amount should be spent for tribal people and tribal area from the general development fund of each district.

With a view to save these literate people from the clutches of the petty traders and money lenders it is suggested that at least one tribal multipurpose and tribal forest labourers co-operative society for a group of 10 villages, on the lines of Madhya Pradesh, may be organized.

In order to develop the tribal areas quickly, it is suggested that 10% of the net forest revenue of each district may be spent on the development of the tribal areas and tribal people.

The seats in employment reserved for the Scheduled Tribes should in no case be filled in by other categories of backward classes. In case in a given year, the candidates are not available, the posts should be kept vacant and to be forwarded to the next year and filled in by the Scheduled Tribes candidates only.

It is generally observed that the benefit of the schemes as taken by literate and economically better tribals. As a result of it, the poor literate tribals like Madia Gonds of Chanda district and Katkaries of Kolaba district do not accrue the benefits of the schemes. It is therefore suggested that while giving benefits of the schemes, priorities should be fixed on the basis of their present educational and economic conditions.

In order to speed up the development programmes of the tribals and with a view to bring them, as early as possible, within the folds of general society, it is suggested that a separate Directorate for Tribal Welfare, headed by Director for Tribal Welfare, should be created as early as possible. The Director should be a specialist having high academic qualifications and administrative experience. The creation of a separate Directorate will result in curbing the growth of the Naxalite elements in the tribal areas.

It is suggested that the schemes of tribal welfare, which are at present implemented by Zilla Parishads, and various other departments, should be gradually withdrawn and implemented by the Tribal Welfare Department.

Two special officers (Class I) for Tribal Welfare for Nagpur and Bombay divisions may be appointed so that these officers can coordinate and implement the activities of tribal welfare at division level. The services of Area Organisers for Tribal Welfare should be utilised for survey, research and welfare work of the tribals in Thana, Nasik, Dhulia, Chanda, Yeotmal, Arnnavati and Poona districts.

In order to improve the economic conditions of the tribals, it is suggested that long period debts, i.e. debts before 1960 may be written off and the debts after 1960 and up to 1965 should be minimized to the extent of 50% and the debts after 1965 should be reduced by 25%. Special provision to this effect should be made in the existing rules.

It should be ensured by the government that the land in no case is alienated to a non-tribal in the tribal areas. Special pay should be given to the staff working in difficult tribal areas.

The Director of Tribal Welfare should be consulted in the development programmes of the tribal areas. He must function as an effective co-ordinator and work as a friend, philosopher and guide of the tribals.

The staff working in the tribal areas should not be transferred unless they complete the service of five years in the area. The service in tribal areas should not be considered as punishment but should be treated with due importance for promotion.

The reputed voluntary organisations, who are rendering services to the tribal people, should be encouraged by providing necessary funds for certain schemes to them. These agencies should be properly guided by the concerned officials. The devoted social workers and the officials can implement the schemes in a better way in the tribal areas. Only government machinery will never succeed in achieving the desired ends.

The present staff of the Tribal Development Block should receive training in tribal orientation. The Tribal Research Institute should start the Training wing as early as possible with a view to impart training to officials and non-officials working in tribal areas.

In order to strengthen leadership among the tribal people, it is suggested that the Tribal Research Institute should organize special courses of a few weeks' duration for this purpose.

If these suggestions are earnestly implemented by the state government there is every hope to raise the standard of these people and to bring them as early as possible in the fold of the general society.



# The Tribal Situation in South India

O. K. MOORTHY

Concentration of tribes in South India is found in the States/Union Territories of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Laccadives. The total tribal population in these states, according to the 1961 Census is 20,04,608. The statewise figures of tribal population and the percentage of the tribal to the total population in the states are given below:

TABLE I

Sl No.	State	Total Population	Population of Sch. Tribes	Percentage of Col. 4 to 3
1	2	3	4	5
1.	Andhra Pradesh	3,59,83,447	13,24,368	3.68
2.	Kerala	1,69,03,715	2,12,762	1.26
3.	Mysore	2,35,86,772	1,92,096	0.81
4.	Tamil Nadu	3,36,86,953	2,51,991	0.75
5.	Laccadives	24,108	23,391	97.12
Total		11,01,84,995	20,04,608	

The districts in which the Scheduled Tribes are concentrated in these states are as under:

TABLE II

## Andhra Pradesh

Districts	Population of Scheduled Tribes	Percentage of tribal to total population in District
Srikakulam	1,92,246	8.21
Visakhapatnam	2,13,820	9.33
Adilabad	1,31,971	13.8
Khamman	1,71,284	16.20
Nellore	1,31,509	6.47
East Godawari	1,00,343	3.85
West Godawari	44,058	2.23
Guntur	95,457	3.17

*Tamil Nadu*

District	Population of Scheduled Tribes	Percentage of Scheduled Tribe population in district to total Scheduled Tribe population in state
Salem	1,00,516	39.89
North Arcot	59,304	23.53
Chingleput	26,327	10.45
Coimbatore	20,143	7.99
South Arcot	13,536	5.37
Nilgiris	12,948	5.14
Tiruchirapalli	8,801	3.49

*Mysore (1951 Census)*

District	Population of Scheduled Tribes
South Kanara	34,000
Coorg	20,000
Mysore	12,000
Dharwar	10,000
Bijapur	10,000

Source: *Census of India, 1961.*

## THE WEAKEST LINK

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission classified tribal communities in India under four categories depending on the level of the development of each. At the base of these four layers is the class of tribals which is in an extremely underdeveloped stage. The Commission gave a list of such extremely backward tribes for purposes of utmost consideration and special attention by government. The Commission recommended that it should be made the special concern of the state governments and special responsibility should be laid upon the chief executive officers concerned with the task of implementing policies for protection as well as development to see that this is done. Following-up these recommendations, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes gave out in his 1967-68 Report, a list of such tribes constituting "the weakest link". The Commissioner carefully analysed the data available in 1961 Census such as literacy, percentage of workers engaged in various occupations, remoteness and inaccessibility of the habitat of Scheduled Tribes, mode of agriculture,

etc. and gave a list of educationally and economically most backward communities. Government of India issued instructions to state governments to ensure that special development programmes are implemented for the benefit of such extremely backward tribal communities. The following are the tribes so categorized in the Southern Zone:

<i>Andhra Pradesh</i>	Chenchu, Gadaba; Hill Reddi, Kolam, Konda Dhora, Konda-Reddi; Kondhi, Koya; Manna-Dhora; Savara; Yenadi.
<i>Kerala</i>	Adiyan; Eravallan; Irular or Irulan; Kadar; Kattunayakan; Kuruman; Kurichchan; Kurumba; Malasar; Malayan; Malai Pandaram; Malai Vedan; Muthuwan, Mudugar or Muduvan; Palleyan; Paniyan.
<i>Tamil Nadu</i>	Irular; Kadar; Kanikkar; Kattunayakan; Mudugar or Muduvan; Malasar; Malayali; Palliyan; Paniyan; Sholaga.
<i>Mysore</i>	Hakkipikki; Iruliga; Jenu-kuruba; Kadu-Kuruba; Koraga; Sligaru Yerava.

#### THE SCHEDULED AREAS

Under the provisions of the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution, certain areas in Andhra Pradesh were declared the Scheduled Areas. The total Scheduled Area in the state is 11,595 sq. miles, situated in the districts of Srikakulam, Visakhapatnam, East Godawari, West Godawari, Adilabad, Mahaboobanagar, Khammam and Warrangal, as against the total geographical area of 1,06,286 sq. miles of the state.

The programme of administration of the Scheduled Areas under the Fifth Schedule places special responsibility on the Governor of the state for screening all pieces of legislation before their extension to the Scheduled Areas and to frame regulations for those areas with particular reference to the allotment of land, prevention of land alienation and protection of the tribal population from exploitation by money lenders. The following legislation is in force in the Scheduled Areas of the state under the Fifth Schedule to the Constitution.

(i) Scheduled Areas Estates (Reduction of Rent Amendment) Regulation;

(ii) The Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas, Land Transfer Regulation, 1959;

(iii) The Madras Scheduled Tribes Estates (Abolition and Conversion into Ryotwari) Regulation, 1951;

(iv) The Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Region Scheduled Areas) Money-lenders Regulation, 1960 (now extended to Telengana Area also);

(v) The Andhra Pradesh (Andhra Areas Scheduled Tribes) Debt Relief

Regulation, 1960 (now extended to Telengana Area also);

(vi) The Agency Debt Bondage Abolition Act, 1946; and

(vii) The Madras Agricultural Debt Relief (Partially excluded Areas Amendment) Regulation, 1944.

No rules are reported to have been framed yet under the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation, 1959 and certain elements in the Scheduled Areas have been taking advantage of the absence of the rules in manipulating clandestine transfers of land in their favour. The state governments are understood to have appointed a special officer to examine the cases relating to alleged transfer of landholdings of the tribals to non-tribals in spite of the land alienation laws and to take steps for the restoration of such land to the tribals.

Under the Andhra Pradesh Moneylenders Regulation, 1960, any person dealing in moneylending in Scheduled Areas is required to possess a licence. In the Governor's Report on the Scheduled Areas in Andhra Pradesh, for the year 1966-67, it was observed that the moneylenders were carrying on their business from outside the Scheduled Areas, which is not contemplated as an offence under the Regulation. It is understood that the State Tribes Advisory Council has approved of the suggestion to amend the relevant section of the

Regulation to deal with this weakness in the law. The state government should take early action to amend the Regulation suitably. A significant step taken by the state government in the Scheduled Areas of the state is that with effect from the 1st July, 1969 the President and Vice-President of every Panchayat Samiti in the Scheduled Areas shall be elected from among the Scheduled Tribe members of the Panchayat Samities.

In the case of Laccadives, all the Islands were a Scheduled Area in Madras State. However, on the reorganization of states, the Islands were constituted a Union Territory and ceased to be a Scheduled Area. All the inhabitants of the Union Territory, both of whose parents were born therein are recognized as Scheduled Tribes.

There are no Scheduled Areas in Mysore and Kerala but only Scheduled Tribes.

#### PREDOMINANCE OF LANDLESS LABOUR

The basic data collected from the various Tribal Development Blocks reveal that more than 80 per cent of the tribal people depend on agriculture for their livelihood. According to the Census figures (1961) out of a total tribal population of 2.98 crores, 1.69 crores (56.64%) are workers and 1.29 crores (43.36%) non-workers. Among the working class, 38.62% have been classified as cultivators, 11.16% as agricultural labourers, 1.94% are engaged in mining, quarrying, etc. 1.40% in Household Industry, 2.57% in other services and 0.95% in other occupations. In this article we propose to discuss the special



problems of tribal people in the Southern Zone, comprising of Andhra Pradesh, Mysore, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. As compared to the All India figures of cultivators, there are only 27.52% in the Southern Zone and the rest of the tribal people in this Zone are either non-workers or engaged in other occupations and are landless people.

#### LANDLESS TRIBES

According to 1961 Census, there were 3.15 crore agricultural labourers in the country of whom 0.33 crore (10.47%) belonged to Scheduled Tribes. In Andhra Pradesh 27.59% of Bhils, 26.76% of Gadabas, 27.12% of Jatapus, 25.01% of Kammaras, 32.08% of Pardhans, 33.12% of Nayaks, 40.44% of Yenadis and 29.42% of Thotis were agricultural labourers. In Mysore State, 36.36% of Yeravas, 25.86% of Chenchus, 21.86% of Bhils, 18.13% of Soligarus, 16.70% of Gonds, 16.70% of Marathis, 16.66% of Kadu Kurubas, 16.28% of Baidas, 16.22% of Koragas were working as agricultural labourers. Similarly in Madras, 40.16% of Paniyans, 31.47% of Malasars, 19.18% of Irulars, 11.72% of Sholagas and 10.08% of Madugars or Maduvans were agricultural labourers. There are a large number of tribes in South India who are still reported to be in the stage of food gathering and practise shifting cultivation. They do not own any land. It is reported that they still keep themselves aloof not only from the non-tribals but also from other tribals.

#### BONDED LABOUR

In spite of the fact that forced or bonded labour is prohibited under Article 23 of the Constitution, it still exists in one form or another in the tribal areas of the Southern states. In Andhra Pradesh, it is called *Vetty*. In Mysore it is called *Jeetha*. In Kerala, the Paniyans and Adiyans suffer from this vicious system in Wynaad area of Kozhikode and Cannanore districts. In Tamil Nadu also stray cases of the practice of bonded labour involving the Sholaga tribe have come to the notice of the authorities of Coimbatore district. Suitable legislation to deal with this system, wherever such a legislation does not exist, as in Tamil Nadu and Kerala, is urgently called for. In other states, as in Andhra Pradesh, where legislation on the subject already exists, the enforcement thereof should be made more rigorous. It is learnt that the Andhra Pradesh (Scheduled Areas) Money Lenders Regulation, 1960, and the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Debt Relief Regulation, 1960, have not been effective in providing full protection to the tribals against exploitation. *Jeetha* or *Gothi* system is still prevalent to some extent in some villages. An enquiry conducted by the Deputy Director, Backward Classes Welfare, Madras, indicated that only three money lenders had obtained licences in the Scheduled Areas of Srikakulam. Alternative credit institutions have also not been developed in

that area, as the cooperative movement has not been much of a success except that the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Cooperative Development and Finance Corporation has made some headway.

#### TRIBES OF WYNAAD

Some of the most interesting tribes of South India such as Kurichians, Kurumbas, Paniyas and Pulayans inhabit the Wynaad taluk of Kerala. When the Wynaad-Nilgiri plateau began to be opened up by European planters, the land was in the possession of a few local landlords but the actual cultivators were the tribals. The tribal peasants lost their holdings to the planters practically getting little or no compensation for the transfer. With the development of pepper, cardamom and coffee plantations on a large scale, there was an influx of labourers from the plains into Wynaad. This had resulted in a lot of displacement of local tribals. Some tribals like Kurichians were practising shifting cultivation, locally called 'Punam'. Many of the Kurichians who were independent farmers, owning substantial acreage of lands, gradually became landless labourers, due to heavy indebtedness and dependence on money lenders for their credit and consumer requirements.

The Paniyas who constituted a substantial number in Wynaad were agrestic slaves, bought and sold along with the land holdings, to which they were attached as labourers. Though forced labour has been abolished, its practice in one form or another is still practised on account of economic dependence of the Paniyas for their livelihood on the landlords. Paniyas are very hard working agricultural labourers.

Irulas, along with their cousins, the Yenadis of Andhra, are mostly engaged as agricultural labourers in the plantations. They are also employed in forest operations. The Forest Department has granted them some land on a temporary basis for cultivation, but the return is hardly adequate for their livelihood.

#### TRIBES OF NILGIRIS

In the Nilgiri district of Tamil Nadu are found the Todas, Kotas, Irulas, Kurumbas, Paniyas and Kattunaikans. The Todas are pastoral tribes divided into 14 clans and inhabiting small hamlets called 'Munds' in the Wenlock Downs near Ootacamund. This area comprised of about 18,000 acres of land and it is reported that in 1822, the Collector of Ootacamund had to purchase land from them for building the first bungalow. When European settlers came in increasing numbers and began to take away the Todas' land, government formulated what was called, the "Toda-Patta Land" policy of reserving lands for pastoral purposes. Gradually, the Toda-Patta lands

came under the control of the Forest Department who exempted the Todas from the operation of the Forest Act for purposes of grazing, removal of fire-wood and grass. Government, therefore, gave adequate facilities for practice of agriculture but since the Todas were essentially pastoral tribes, the lands were leased to Badagas, while Todas were absentee landlords. The Todas continued to be given Pattas, renewable every year for cultivation. The demand of the Todas, however, is that they should be allotted these lands permanently. The Todas, by virtue of their deep attachment and religious belief, would not like to leave the Wenlock Downs and migrate to other areas.

The Kotas are a hardworking tribe of artisans and agriculturists. They are excellent blacksmiths, carpenters and umbrella makers. They also work on gold and silver jewellery. There is a system of barter even now between the Todas and Kotas. The Kotas supply axes and other agricultural implements while Todas in turn allow the removal of carcasses, horns and hides of animals.

#### SHIFTING CULTIVATION

Shifting cultivation, commonly known as *Jhum* or *Podu*, is the traditional system practised by tribals in the hill areas. It consists of cleaning the forest slopes, burning the fallen trees and bushes and dibbling or broadcasting the seed in the ash-covered soil. The rest is left to nature. For the first one or two years, good crops are produced but the fertility of the soil is soon lost and some of it is washed away in heavy rain. Cultivators then shift to other clearings and thus the cycle continues in rotation. Among the states in South India, the problem is acute in Andhra Pradesh and is practised to a smaller extent in the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Mysore.

#### SHIFTING CULTIVATION NECESSARY EVIL

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission were of the view that since nearly 10 per cent of the tribal population depended on shifting cultivation, they could not be deprived of their land, their livelihood and their way of life for theoretical opinion about an agricultural practice on which not all the experts agreed. Every one agreed that it was not an ideal method and wherever possible, terracing or other means of cultivation should be introduced. But over vast areas this is not possible and it is likely to continue for a long time to come. In the meantime, the commission were of the opinion that the proper course was to regulate the practice, experiment with it, improve it, and try other workable alternatives. Shifting cultivation is tied with the tribal way of life and it is thus much more than technical problem pertaining only to the improved techniques of farming and agriculture. It is a mixed problem, partly connected with the physical conditions of the land and partly with social customs, traditions and beliefs.

Any hurried departure from a practice may therefore meet with complications.

The policy pursued by government so far has been to transfer batches of population living on shifting cultivation. During the First Five Year Plan, four colonization schemes were started in Andhra Pradesh under the Shifting Cultivation Control Scheme. It was estimated that upto 1963-64 about 520 families had settled in permanent cultivation in the state. During the III Plan the schemes undertaken included three Pilot farms and five agro-demonstration units.

In their efforts to wean away the tribals from the habit of shifting cultivation the Government of Kerala have been implementing a few colonization schemes and pilot schemes to settle them in selected areas. Under Centrally Sponsored Programme, a colonization scheme at Achencoil in Qulon district was started for Malapandarams during the Second Five Year Plan period. Forty families were settled on 100 acres of land and houses were constructed for them. Three pilot schemes were started for the Muthuvans of Edamalai, Hill Pulayas of Champakad and Kadars of Parambikulam. Lands were provided to them for agriculture and necessary agricultural implements were also supplied. Seeds and other facilities were also provided to them for their permanent settlement in the area. A similar scheme for settling 50 families of Mannas at Mannakandam was also taken up.

In Tamil Nadu, shifting cultivation is not widely practised by tribals. During the Second Plan, a sum of Rs. 1 lakh was allotted under the Central Sector for colonization of shifting cultivators. A scheme for colonization of 675 families at Pandalur in Gudalur Taluk of Nilgiris district was also taken up.

#### DEPENDENCE ON FORESTS

Roughly, half the tribal area is covered with forests. Any programme, therefore, of economic development of the tribes must be related to the utilization of forests for the maximum advantage of the dependent local population.

There is another ecological aspect which has a direct bearing on low productivity in agriculture which necessitates dependence of the tribal people on forests for their sustenance. It is on account of the geographical configuration of tribal areas being mostly located in altitudes between 1000 to 3,000 ft. and the terrain being hilly with the consequent loss of fertility and soil erosion that agriculture as a source of livelihood has been mostly unproductive. This situation, added to the increasing pressure of population has compelled the tribals to become entirely dependent for their subsistence on forests. In the light of this, it is imperative that any programme of economic betterment of the tribal necessarily involves exploitation of forest resources with the tribal welfare angle and not with the sole object of maximum revenue for the state.



Certain characteristics of tribal economy need to be pointed out to enable us to understand the implications of any programme of welfare and development. Tribal economy, especially in the inaccessible areas is non-monetized. The transactions are still carried on, on the basis of a system of barter. The weekly markets where the agricultural and forest produce are exchanged play an important role in tribal economy. The essential requirements of consumer goods which have invariably to be brought from outside are salt, kerosene, coarse cloth, matches, tea, gur, cheap brands of soap, aluminium utensils, plastic goods, tobacco products, etc. These products are purchased by exchange of agricultural produce from the traders and petty shopkeepers who are also the moneylenders.

#### MALPRACTICES BY MONEYLENDERS

The tribals who are mostly uneducated, have no idea of weights and measures or wholesale prices of the consumer goods they purchase in exchange for their forest and agricultural produce. The simple tribal is not aware that when he sells his produce, a larger weight and measure is used, while a smaller one is applied for selling outside goods to him. Further, the traders advance funds for various ceremonies on personal security, during the lean season, on the understanding that the tribal would return the amount with interest in the form of forest or agricultural produce after the harvest. The entire crop is thus mortgaged in advance and very little remains for the personal consumption of the tribal after the collection by the trader during the harvest. Even if the market rates are higher at the time of the harvest, the tribal is only paid the agreed price, which is lower. On the other hand, if there is a fall in the market rate than what was agreed upon, the tribal is only paid the then prevailing market rate. The tribal is unaware of this subtle form of exploitation.

There is so much poverty in tribal areas that the tribal finds it difficult even to meet his day-to-day consumption needs for which he borrows not only in cash but grain too from the same trader under the conditions explained above. Apart from borrowing for ceremonies and consumption purposes another major cause for debt has been liquor. In many cases, the liquor vendor also happens to be the trader-cum-moneylender. This complicates the situation further. A word need be said about the exorbitant rate of interest charged by the moneylenders, both on cash and grain transactions. The rate of interest varies from 50 to 100 per cent and sometimes even more.

Burden of heavy debt descends from father to son and even to the third and fourth generations. An analysis of the causes of debt reveals that apart from requirements for consumption purposes, they have been incurred mostly for social obligations, marriage and death ceremonies and lavish hospitality to the entire village community. These practices are the outcome of powerful customs deeply ingrained in tribal tradition. Surveys conducted

in the tribal areas of Andhra Pradesh reveal that though the quantum of individual debt varies from tribe to tribe and area to area, the causes of indebtedness are more or less the same as enumerated above.

One feature of tribal indebtedness that has been exploited most by moneylenders is the traditional honesty of the tribal in the matter of fully discharging his obligations to the creditor. It is for this reason that loans are advanced without any security whatsoever. In most of the transactions there are no documents exchanged. The entries made in the moneylender's book are the only evidence believed by the tribal. Entries are not made in the moneylender's book of the money paid by the tribals. One would also observe that the moneylender even takes the initiative to induce the tribals to incur debt.

The above brief account of exploitation by the moneylender-cum-trader suggests that an effective solution to the problem lies in replacing him by a government or cooperative agency, that would market the entire produce of the tribals, provide them with the necessities of life at fair prices and offer credit. A change in tribal economy for the better can be achieved only if the forest contractor is replaced by a cooperative that can undertake all the necessary functions. In the 1952 Forest Policy Resolution of the Government of India it was clearly laid down that "Intermediaries who exploit both the forests and local labour for their own benefit, may, with advantage, be supplanted gradually by forest labour cooperative societies which may be formed to suit local conditions".

#### RECOMMENDATIONS OF COMMITTEE ON TRIBAL ECONOMY

The Committee on Tribal Economy in Forest Areas recommended that there shall be three tiers of Forest Cooperative Societies as under:

(1) The *Primary Society* each comprising at least 25-30 members. The area of operation of such society should comprise one or more working units of forests. The society will be sponsored by a social service organization or by government department.

(2) The *District Federation* to include a sizeable group of primary cooperatives within a division, a district or a revenue division to guide the working of primary cooperatives and exercise necessary control on them.

(3) An *Apex Body* to coordinate and guide the movement of forest labour cooperatives within the state.

#### THE ANDHRA PRADESH SCHEDULED TRIBES COOPERATIVE FINANCE AND DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The Corporation was started in Andhra Pradesh with the object of eliminating exploitation of tribals by contractors and trader-cum-moneylenders. It started

functioning in the year 1956-57 with a limited area of operation, on a modest scale, by initially establishing two Agency Produce Cooperative Marketing Societies—one at Gumalakhimpuram, in Srikakulam district and the other at Downuru in Visakhapatnam district, with the object of purchasing the minor forest produce and agricultural produce brought by members of the Scheduled Tribes and to supply their domestic requirements. The Corporation has now 12 societies affiliated as its members.

The Corporation received a sum of Rs. 12.93 lakhs—Rs. 3.00 lakhs from the Government of India and Rs. 9.93 lakhs from the state government as capital aid. Out of this amount, a sum of Rs. 7.79 lakhs was invested on vehicles while Rs. 5.11 lakhs was spent on buildings. The remaining amount of Rs. 3,000 was utilized for purchasing furniture, tools and implements. The state government also gives a recurring grant of Rs. 4.5 lakhs every year to meet the establishment charges.

A study of the working of the corporation was made by the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute, Hyderabad, during 1967-68.

The findings of the study indicate that the trader-cum-moneylender is still exploiting the tribals through certain underhand methods. This requires to be checked urgently. Moreover, a strict vigil should be kept on the employees doubted to be corrupt, so that they may not fleece the tribals as otherwise the very purpose of the Corporation will be defeated.

#### LAND—MAIN CAUSE OF TRIBAL UPRISING AND ALIENATION UNREST

Exploitation of tribal land by outsiders has led to many disturbances such as the Rampa rebellion in East Godvari, the Bastar Rising of 1911, the civil disobedience in the Kond Maliahs of Orissa. In the Agency areas of Andhra Pradesh there were fituris by the Koyas, the last of which was led by Alluri Seetharama Raju. This movement synchronized with the non-cooperation movement. The resistance of the Koyas took the form of violent guerilla warfare to meet intensive attacks by the police. Though the Koya resisters were ruthlessly suppressed and the movement liquidated, the forest rules, as a result, were relaxed and forced labour restrained. The Koya rebellion was preceded by uprisings in 1803, 1862 and 1879. The 1862 revolt was against the Muttadars who formed a chain of intermediary rent collectors appointed by the British. Reporting on the Muttadari system in 1951, a team of experts said. The "Muttadars, or at least some of them, are still enforcing *vetti* or forced labour and appropriating to themselves the best lands in any village. So long as they exist, they will not allow the tribals to come up". In comparatively recent times also, in the Adilabad district many Gonds and Kolams rebelled in 1941 as a result of the alienation of land and enforcement of forest regulations.

## ANNEXURE I

## Muttadari System

Most of the Agency Areas of Visakhapatnam district and parts of East Godavari and Khammam districts were previously situated in Zamin Estates, under Tenure Estates and 'Mokhasas'. All these 'Muttas' and 'Mokhasas' were taken over by the government under the provisions of the Estate Abolition Act, 1948. But the areas taken over by the government still remained unsurveyed and unsettled and collection of the revenue is being done on a plough-rate basis. Some of the *Muttas* are still under the control of *Muttadars*. The *Muttadars* are granted *Sanads* by the government and they in turn pay *Kattubadi* to the government. There is one *Pattadar* or *Voora Munsif* for every village who collects *Kists* from ryots on behalf of the *Muttadar* concerned. The *Pattadar* or the *Voora Munsif* does not maintain accounts for the money collected. As such it is not possible to know how much he collects. The *Kuttubadi* noted in *Sanads* was fixed long ago. If steps are taken to refix it, there can be considerable increase in revenue to government. In some erstwhile estate areas, *Sanads* granted by the land holders to the *Muttadars* in regard to collections of rents on behalf of land holders have become void since the Estates were taken over by the government. So the question as to what would become of the *Sanads* granted by the government in regard to maintenance of law and order in this area is understood to be under the consideration of the state government are also actively considering to abolish the *Muttadari* and *Malguzari* systems and to introduce *Ryotwari* system in these areas as early as possible.\*

A survey on the *Muttadari* system in five villages in Chaintapalli Taluk of Visakhapatnam district was made by the Commissioner's organization in 1966-67. The main findings are as under:

- (i) *Muttadari*, in its full-fledged form, is not in operation now in the Agency areas of Visakhapatnam and East Godavari districts. It exists in its older form in the government *muttas* and a few estate *muttas*, where it has not been possible to replace it due to a number of legal difficulties. However, all the *muttadars* continue to wield a great deal of influence over the ryots and are in enjoyment of various facilities including rent-free land, because it has not been possible for the government to dispense totally with their services in collecting land revenue and also because of the *sanads* granted to them for performing duties connected with the maintenance of law and order. Some of the *muttadars* have even reinforced their position through their family members who have been elected to the Panchayats.

\*This was abolished in October 1969—Ed



- (ii) The economic condition of the common tribal ryots is not very good and there is incidence of landlessness as well as existence of small and uneconomic holdings. The *muttadars* take advantage of this position in the areas where *muttadari* has not been abolished. They can easily obtain free or under-paid labour (*vetti*) for their own work and also collect the old 'mamuls' from the poorer tribals, especially by allowing the latter some land for cultivation. In the villages which are close to the centres of administration, this practice is not so common but in the interior areas it goes on. In the areas where *muttadari* has been abolished, the *muttadars* take advantage of their continued association with revenue collection to obtain some labour services and 'mamuls', though in these cases its magnitude may not be as much as in the areas where *muttadari* continues.
- (iii) The *muttadars* have large holdings, and usually the better type of land. Though their lands do not lay it down under an universal custom no *muttadar* pays any rent for his lands. Moreover, the family members of the *muttadar* and their close relations also possess good and large holdings and no rents are realized from them, perhaps, because the apportionment of demands amongst the ryots in a village is left to the discretion of the *voora munsiffs* or *fettamdars* under each *muttadar*. The *voora munsiffs* and *fettamdars*, also enjoy large and good land without paying any rent because of that arrangement.
- (iv) The *voora munsiffs* have been augmenting their collections from individual ryot from time to time though they never contribute towards the improvement in the land in question. They have also been 'approving' of unwritten and illegal mortgages of lands from tribals to others, including non-tribals, and have probably been charging extra money from the parties concerned as a payment for their approval. It is difficult to ascertain the extent to which *muttadars* gain under all such arrangements, because the collection by *voora munsiffs* is not regulated by the *sanads*.
- (v) The actual collections to be made by the *muttadars* from ryots and the proportion thereof which should be kept by them as their remuneration was fixed a long time ago through the *sanads* granted to them. At present their collections far exceed those fixed amounts because of the considerable extension of cultivated areas and other factors, and it is difficult to know as to what incomes they are deriving from the *mutta*.

# The Tribal Situation in Andhra Pradesh

D.R. PRATAP

## TRIBAL CANVAS

The tribal Andhra Pradesh is varied in ethnic composition and cultural patterns. The Scheduled areas constitute an important tribal belt of the Eastern and Western Deccan and sprawl from the scattered hill ranges of the Adilabad district in the west to the irregular hill ranges of the great Eastern Ghats bordering Orissa through the continuous hill ranges touching the borders of Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra in the middle. A small patch of Scheduled Area is situated in the heart of Andhra Pradesh covering the Amarabad plateau in Mahaboobnagar district and Nallamalai hill ranges in Kurnool district. The Scheduled area of 11,595 sq. miles is distributed over 8 districts of Andhra Pradesh covering 4,346 scheduled villages. Thus most of the tribal area is bordering on the States of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa. The numerous tribal groups inhabiting the region are distributed on either side of the border. The border tribes who indulge in crossing over the borders in search of better occupation and marital relations are Gond, Kolam Naikpod, Pradhan, Koya, Bhagata, Valmiki, Savara, Khond, and Gadaba constituting about one third of the total Scheduled Tribes population of Andhra Pradesh. The remaining Scheduled Tribes population of Andhra Pradesh, such as Yanadi, Yerukula and Sugali are mostly scattered amidst the plains living non-tribals. Even some of the hill tribes are found living in the adjoining plains areas in symbiosis with plains people. The total population of the thirty three scheduled tribes is 13.24 lakhs constituting 3.68% to the total population of the state. 5.31 lakhs of Scheduled Tribes population is encompassed in the 24 tribal development blocks while 5.03 lakhs live in plains areas amidst non-tribals. The rest (2.90 lakhs) are concentrated in pockets situated inside and outside the Scheduled areas. Amongst the four Southern states, Andhra Pradesh has the largest concentration of Scheduled Tribes.

In ethnic, social, economic and cultural complexities, the tribes of Andhra Pradesh reflect a miniature tribal India. Chenchus and Yanadis exhibit Negrito strain whereas the Khond and Savara slightly resemble the Mongoloid stock. The rest of tribes have proto-Austroloid characteristics.

The social structure of the tribes is also marked by bewildering regional and ethnic diversity. Most of the tribal groups inhabiting the agency tracts of

Adilabad district are characterized by a well developed four-fold phratry organisation. At the other extreme of the tribal belt, the Savara social organization is peculiar by the absence of clan organization. And in between these two extremities exist the tribes like Koya, Konda Reddi, Bhagata, Mukha Dora, Manne Dora, and Valmiki, who have non-totemistic clans. Again the Khond and the Gadaba depict different social organisation with loose phratry organizations which is the product of the prescribed and proscribed marital relations and the traditional bond friendship. Besides the horizontal stratification in each tribe, the various tribal groups of the region have been socially stratified into a hierarchy with superior status groups like Bhagatas occupying the highest rung of the social ladder and Valmiki occupying the lowest rung, with other tribal groups occupying the intermediary rungs according to the status criteria decreed by tradition and reflected in their commensal and other behavioural patterns.

Ritually, there are broad similarities between the various tribal groups inhabiting the state. The most striking similarity is the existence of Bhima cult among all the tribes of Andhra Pradesh and many of them trace their mythical origin to the Pandavas, especially Bhuma. Further, all of them perform the first fruit eating festivals, fertility festivals and certain seasonal festivals. The performance of life cycle ceremonies at the family level resulted in the evolution of propitiation of ancestral spirits and the consequent individual religious functionaries. While almost all the tribal groups either ignore or prohibit women from actively participating in ritual proceedings, the Samanthas bestow special ritual status on their women as is evident from the institution of 'Pejjini' the priestess, who plays a dominant role in seasonal as well as life cycles ceremonies.

In the sphere of economy also, the tribes of Andhra Pradesh present a heterogenous structure. While the jungle folks of Nallamalai and Amarabad plateau have a subsistence economy, living by collecting forest produce for their food and working as forest labour to earn a little money to meet their meagre requirements the plains living tribals. Yerukulas and Yanadi are earning their livelihood by pursuing various professions which include indigenous and mid-wifery, catching rodents and snakes for skins and venom, pedlery, domestic work, domestication of pigs, etc. which compel them to lead seminomadic life. On the other hand most of the tribes inhabiting the forest tracts and hilly regions mainly subsist on agriculture of one type or other. The tribes like Samanthas, Gadabas, Konda Reddis, Savaras, etc. which are mostly confined to hilly tracts mainly subsist on shifting cultivation as the flat land available for settled cultivation is very limited. The tribals who are confined to foothills and flat lands of the agency areas thrive on settled plough cultivation and lead a sedentary life. The Koya, Bhagata, Valmiki and Naikpod are mostly settled cultivators. But these groups sometimes resort to shifting cultivation if enough land is not available for dry or wet cultivation. In between

these food gatherers and cultivators the pastoral tribes like Banjaras and Goudus rear cattle for commercial purposes and the Amarabad bulls are a well known breed specially developed by Banjaras of the region. Forest plays a vital role in the economy of all the forest dwelling tribes for forests provide them with food in the form of tubers, roots, leaves, fruits, flesh of animals and birds and cures illnesses by supplying medicinal herbs. Skins, hides, horns of wild game and minor forest produce are exploited for commercial purposes. This agro-forest based economy is subject to vagaries of nature. The rocky terrain, infertile soil, freak nature, extreme seasonal conditions, lack of perennial sources of water, predatory birds and animals and the parasitic hold of money lenders and plains sowcars forced them to live in perpetual poverty. Especially, with improvement in transport and communications and eradication of malaria, many plains people have migrated to the hitherto inaccessible and inhospitable areas in search of livelihood as traders and agriculturists and are mostly responsible for reducing the poverty stricken tribals to farm labourers by alienating their lands through usury and deceitful business transactions.

Since time immemorial the tribal societies developed indigenous institutions of social control for sustaining harmonious intra-tribal and inter-tribal relations. In the backdrop of their cultural pluralism and social stratification there is ample scope for friction and maladjustment. This situation assumes special importance in view of the multi-ethnic composition of the tribal villages in Andhra Pradesh. But the temporary phases of conflict and tension never pose a serious threat to the peaceful life in village as these traditional institutions promptly reconcile the hostile factions. Every tribe has its own community council presided over by a hereditary head man. The village level council is composed of such elders drawn from various tribes. While family feuds, violations of sexual, commensal and other prescribed norms and taboos are the main concern of the individual tribal council, breaking of the tribe endogamy, thefts, certain disputes over land and other forms of property and celebration of village festivals fall under the purview of the village council. One distinguishing feature of the tribals of East Godavari, Vishakapatnam and Srikakulam tribal areas is the existence of 'Muttadari' system\* which is a relic of the British feudal system in which a hereditary 'Muttadar' is the head of a group of villages. He collects land revenue and pays a fixed 'Kattubadi' (revenue) to the government. He is the custodian of law and order of the area. For his services he retains the land revenue collected in excess of the 'Kattubadi' amount and enjoys rent free lands. In course of time these authoritarian leaders assumed all pervasive powers and became the supreme authorities in all walks of tribal life. The prevalence of 'Muttadari' system almost reduced the tribals to serfdom.

\*The system was abolished in October, 1969.



## DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

It was to this socio-cultural matrix that a new dimension has been given by the introduction of Community Development Programme and the consequent instrumentality of Panchayat Raj intended to uplift the tribals and achieve rapid integration with the larger society of the region and the nation. The integrated approach has been envisaged for the all round development of tribals during the three plan periods with the inauguration of multi purpose projects in four tribal pockets, namely, Utnoor in Adilabad district, Narasampeta in Warangal district, Paderu and Araku in Vishaka-patnam district where the largest number of tribals are concentrated. Today there are as many as 24 Tribal Development Blocks with a Scheduled Tribe population of 5.31 lakhs covering major portion of the scheduled area in Andhra Pradesh. Here it is very important to note that only 40 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes are deriving the benefits of the intensive programme of tribal development as they are living in Tribal Development Blocks. The rest of the scheduled tribes inhabiting plains and tribal pockets are denied the benefits of the tribal development programmes. Spectacular results have been achieved in the introduction of improved agricultural practices like use of improved seeds, implements, fertilisers and insecticides, trans-plantation of seedlings and some of the commercial crops like chillies, tobacco, sugarcane, potato, etc. Another noteworthy feature is rejuvenation of the cooperative movement by introducing a new institution the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation which is largely contributing for infusing vitality into tribal economy by arranging organized marketing system and providing agricultural credit facilities through a network of Primary Societies and Purchase and Sales Depots for the exclusive benefit of tribals. The overall performance of the programmes did not yield the expected results in other fields like industry, social education, women welfare and youth welfare. The programme sometimes fell short of targets because of the following reasons:

(1) Stereo-typed programmes have been introduced without taking into consideration the felt needs of the people.

(2) Lack of follow-up financial provision resulted in half finished works.

(3) Introduction of too many programmes resulted in diffusion of effort.

(4) The programmes are devoid of tribal bias due to lack of knowledge of tribal beliefs and customs.

(5) Failure of leadership to provide the necessary guidance due to absence of enlightened leadership who are well versed in the intricacies of statutory provisions and administrative procedures.

(6) Introduction of sophisticated institutions like Mahila Mandali and youth club failed to appeal to the mind of ignorant tribal women and youth.

(7) 'Matter of fact' approach of the official functionary and the consequent

indifference to convince the tribal of the benefits of the innovations.

(8) Chronic ignorance and proverbial apathy of the tribal to adopt innovations.

In view of the above mentioned factors, the hiatus between one tribe and the other on one hand and between one tribals and non tribals on the other is yet to be bridged.

#### CULTURAL DYNAMICS

In spite of long standing contacts between the tribals and non-tribals the social life of the tribes is still custom-bound as marriage by capture, elopment, levirate, excommunication and expiatory rituals, exogamous phratry and clan organization, which are entirely absent among the non-tribals of the region are socially approved among the tribals.

The ritual practices are more characterized by bloody sacrifices, ritual dances, music and song and strict observance in every detail of the ritual on every important social and religious occasion. Their religious practices are nearer to animism. Another noteworthy feature of tribes of Andhra Pradesh is that only a handful of them are converted to other faiths. As such adherence to conflicting religious faiths and consequent frictions have seldom posed serious threat to the social harmony in the tribal villages. Further, many of them worship even non-tribal deities and it is a common sign that the idols like Rama, Hanuman and Ganesh find a place along with the tribal deities.

Education is a vital factor in accelerating integration. While non-tribal societies are progressing at a greater speed, the tribal societies are moving at snail's pace and the gap between the two societies remains as wide as ever, if not more. The economic backwardness of tribal household, non-production oriented educational system, stereotyped syllabi and curricula, disinterested teaching staff, lack of persuasion and follow up employment programme suited to tribal conditions are some of the major hurdles standing in the way of bridging the gap. According to 1961 Census only 4.41 per cent of the tribals are literate in Andhra Pradesh while at the State level 21.20 per cent are literate. The ground to be covered is so vast that one is left to wonder whether this could be achieved at least within a reasonable period of a decade or two.

Unlike non-tribal societies, the tribal societies suffer from lack of enlightened leadership to fill the political vacuum created by the introduction of Panchayati Raj. Most of the tribal Samiti Presidents and Sarpanches belong to neo-traditional category of leadership as the traditional leaders could successfully capture the statutory leadership because of their long standing traditional hold. But when it comes to actual discharge of their duties according to statutory provisions, these neo-traditional leaders

have been floundering as neither traditional decrees nor thorough knowledge of the intricacies of the rules and regulations come to their rescue because the former are out of context and in the latter they are ignorant. A tribal Sarpanch is more successful as traditional leader rather than as a statutory leader. At the Samithi level the situation is still ambiguous. Plains settlers play a dominant role in the election of the tribal Samithi President. Such a President functions without spontaneous popular support or the skill of a seasoned politician. This analysis ultimately leads us to the question whether this super structure of institutionalized leadership in tribal areas is ahead of times.

#### PROTECTIVE LEGISLATION

It is into this vacuum that certain leftist movements infiltrated taking advantage of simmering discontent caused by the nefarious activities of non-tribal merchants, moneylenders and agriculturists who alienated fertile tracts tribal lands through illegal and reprehensive means of money lending and business and the consequent reduction of the real tribal owner to the position of farm labourer. In accordance with the provisions of the constitution, several welfare legislations such as Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Areas Land Transfer Regulation 1969 and Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Area Debt Relief Regulation II of 1960, have been enacted in order to protect the rights of tribal on land and from the exploitation of moneylenders. Besides these, the State government have passed several Acts and Regulations exclusively to safeguard the interests of Scheduled Tribes of the State. Even after the enactment of all these protective legislations, neither land alienation nor the activities of private moneylenders could be effectively curbed due to cunning manoeuvreability of the provisions of the Acts by the money lenders. The socio-economic surveys conducted in Chintapalli and Bhadrachalam Tribal Development Blocks bear out that the provisions of Section 3 of the Land Transfer Regulation I of 1959 have been circumvented in as many as 40 and 31 land alienation cases recorded in 8 and 7 vilages of Chintapalli and Bhadrachalam Tribal Development Blocks respectively. The end product of this situation is the formation of a psychological chasm between tribal and non-tribal or in other words agrieved and oppressor. Extending of the forest boundaries upto the village and restricting the operations of 'Podu' cultivation without providing immediately alternative livelihood led to the frustration of the tribal.

#### COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT

Until the first quarter of the twentieth century the tribal areas had been in virtual isolation but for the contacts with an insignificant number of plains itinerant traders who used to sell salt, spices and clothes to the tribals in exchange of their hill produce. Even this delicate link was subject to the

vagaries of seasonal variations and agency diseases, especially black water fever and malaria. After stabilization of British rule all over India in the latter half of the nineteenth century the wings of the government administration had been slowly extended to the tribal areas. The British started a sort of indirect rule over these inaccessible and unhealthy areas through feudal intermediaries like the local Rajas, Zamindars and Muttadars who are directly responsible to the government agent of the district. Only in times of disturbances the government directly came into contact with local tribals and passed certain pacifying legislations. Thus the British exercised loose administrative control over the tribal areas.

The advent of independence heralded a new era of positive approach by directly coming to grips with the problems of tribals. For the first time the government administrative machinery directly came into contact with the tribals. The activities of certain voluntary organizations like *Bhartiya Adimjati Sevak Sangh*, *Sramika Dharam Raja Sabha* and *Servants of India Society* received impetus due to the benevolent attitude of the government by way of liberal grants and the sincere efforts of social workers like *Thakkar Bapa* and *Mandeswara Sarma* in promoting tribal education and associated welfare programmes. Further, the extension of *Community Development Programme* into tribal areas gave fillip to the development of communication on a large scale and the consequent relations with the tribals. Construction of major hydro-electric projects like *Machkund* and *Sileru* and largescale exploitation of forest wealth and minerals such as iron ore, manganese, limestone and coal opened up tribal areas by laying up of all weather 'pucca' roads and railway tracks through the length and breadth of the tribal areas of *Andhra Pradesh* and the neighbouring states. A giant step forward in this direction is the laying of the prodigious *D. B. K. Railway* cutting across the hitherto inaccessible and isolated tribal habitations of *Madhya Pradesh*, *Orissa* and *Andhra Pradesh*, connecting important iron ore and other mineral mines with the major sea port of *Vishakapatnam* and other nerve centres of transport and communications and industries of the country. The project promises vast employment opportunities and closer contacts with the outside world with the introduction of passenger traffic in the near future. Certain public health programmes like *National Malaria Eradication Programme* and *Yaws Eradication Programme* have yielded fruitful results and the hitherto inhospitable areas have become congenial for habitation of plainsmen. Hence many plains people who could not make out their livelihood in their native habitat, began migrating to the virgin lands of tribal areas and started systematic exploitation of the tribals. Along with them their superior technology, knowledge of improved agricultural practices and certain vices and venereal diseases have also been spread in the tribal areas. But in general, while the tribal could not derive the benefits of the superior technological knowledge due to his ignorance and economic backwardness, he slowly acquired the



vices of the plainsmen and lost his valuable land to the non-tribal through gambling, drinking illicit liquor, sophisticated food, and dress and decoration and consequent indebtedness. Thus this contact situation instead, of helping the tribal to slowly imbibe the cultural traits of non-tribals to his advantage, resulted in maladjustment between the tribal and non-tribal.

Further, the introduction of a network of communications on a large-scale and welfare institutions like Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation has resulted in rapid monetization of the economic transactions, by supplanting the traditional barter system of the tribes. This switchover to monetary economy resulted in multiplication of wants without a corresponding increase in means to satisfy them.

The introduction of community development programme in the plain areas improved socio-economic conditions of the plains men and brought them almost to take off stage, whereas the tribal societies could not reap the full benefits of the programmes and catch up with the fast progressing plains people because of their traditional economic and cultural drawbacks. The age-old differences in the levels of social and economic life of the tribals and non-tribals could not be wiped out. Even after the implementation of multiple developmental programmes, the tribal could not 'jump the gap' and catch up with the plains people as their pace of progress is not fast enough. The introduction of numerous development programmes and their haphazard implementation confused the ignorant tribal, necessitating radical reorientation of tribal development programmes to suit the needs of the tribals.

The recent restiveness in the tribal belt of coastal districts of Andhra Pradesh, especially in Srikakulam district, is a sign of the malady plaguing the minds of the tribals. It is not enough to recognize and suppress the symptoms, and radical treatment is imperative to cure the rootcause of the disease by proper diagnosis and correct prescription.

The first and foremost remedy lies in providing properly reclaimed lands to as many landless tribals as possible since land is the cherished possession of the tribal and the most important source of income. All potential irrigation sources must be harnessed on a war footing and the improved agricultural practices, suitable strains of seeds, cattle breed and implements should be evolved and diffused through perseverance and persuasion. To achieve the emancipation of the tribals from the vicious hold of moneylenders and *sowcars* sufficient agricultural loans should be issued and improved marketing facilities for their hill produce should be provided by strengthening the activities of cooperative institutions like A.P. Scheduled Tribes Co-operative Finance and Development Corporation. The survey and settlement must be expedited to confer the long awaited *patta* rights over the land for the tribal cultivators so as to allay the fears of losing his land and make him credit worthy too.

Immediate framing of rules and the effective implementation of various protective legislations through a specially fabricated machinery should be given top priority in dealing with land alienation cases and cases of violation of Money Lenders' Regulation in order to curb the activities of moneylenders and *sowcars*. The cooperative institutions have a specific role in providing the much needed credit facilities to tribals. As poverty breeds contempt and contempt leads to unrest, special programmes should be evolved for the advancement of relatively backward groups in order to alleviate the social and economic inequalities existing between one tribe and the other. Education is a sine-qua-non for rapid integration. The stereotyped education system should be remodelled so as to shift the stress from literacy-based education to production-based education. Special attention should be given to teaching tribal lore and at the same time to inculcate a spirit of nationalism by incorporating appropriate lessons stressing national unity and the vital role of the tribal in preserving the integrity of the country through dance, drama and songs. The key to gauge the feelings and needs of the tribals lies in evolving enlightened leadership. To fill the existing vacuum secondary system of leadership should be nurtured so as to provide the progressive type of leadership, for effective implementation of development programmes. Both national and provincial leaders have an august duty in the evolution of responsible leadership by providing necessary guidance and training. The voluntary organisations can spot the talent in their plastic age and project them at the appropriate moment to the mature politicians. Experience proved that integrated approach of Community Development Programme has not come up to the expectations as it resulted in diffusion of human effort and finance. Hence under present economic stringency selective approach should be preferred to bring the tribaleconomy to take off stage. Specific programmes are to be evolved on the basis of the felt needs of the tribals living in (a) forest and hilly tracts, (b) plains areas and (c) tribal pockets as the economic and social environments of these groups markedly vary.

Besides the approach at state level, through the Tribal Development Blocks, the problem is to be tackled on a regional basis in view of ethnic, cultural, economic and linguistic similarities and geographical contiguity in the distribution of certain tribal groups such as Pradhan, Koya, Savara, Khond, Kotia, Valmiki, Bagata, etc. in the neighbourhood of and on either side of the borders of one or two neighbouring states. An integrated area development approach may be adopted to suit the homogeneous communities by taking into consideration regional natural resources, ethnic identity and occupational similarities, needs of communication and transport, local agricultural and minor forest produce potentialities and network of marketing system for providing an outlet for agency produce. Special machinery and finance may be provided in addition to the development machinery and finances channelled through the Community and Tribal Development

Programmes of respective states. Special programmes like industries, transport and communications, major and medium irrigation programmes, higher education and electrification can be more fruitfully tackled on a regional basis rather than at block level. For this purpose a national level body should undertake preliminary survey for carving out tribal belts and evolving suitable plans for each belt.

However, it is very important to remember that the same principle cannot be applied for evolving comprehensive programmes of development aimed at integrating the tribal groups with the society at large as the factors of discontent and maladjustment and the nature of felt needs vary from region to region. The existing hiatus between tribals and non tribals must be bridged to achieve integration. The modus operandi for this herculean task is by the fruitful exploitation of the natural resources to the advantage of local tribals, improving education facilities by establishing craft-based residential schools, linking every nook and corner of the tribal areas through a network of communication facilities, dispelling ethnocentricism of non-tribal communities and by initiating a process of cultural exchange between the tribal and non-tribal.

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# Tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Island

T.N. PANDIT

## GEOGRAPHY

Spread over nearly 600 miles of sea in the Bay of Bengal between Cape Negrais in Burma and the Indonesian Island of Sumatra is a chain of some 225 Islands known as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, also called the Bay Islands. This chain of islands skirts the peninsular coast and forms a single geographical system of partly submerged mountains that is part of the Arakan Yoma range extending between the Burmese mainland and Sumatra (Indonesia). Most of the smaller islands are uninhabited. The larger islands numbering only a dozen or so are all inhabited.

The Islands are situated within a quadrangle formed by 10th and 14th degrees of north latitude and 92nd and 94th degrees of east-longitude.

The total area of the islands is 3,215 sq. miles (8,293 sq. kilometres) of which the area of Andaman group alone is 2,461 sq. miles. The Andaman group is constituted by over 200 islands and islets while Nicobar group consists of some 20 odd islands. The extreme length of Andaman is 219 miles and extreme width 32 miles. The extreme length of Nicobars is 136 miles and extreme width 36 miles.

The terrain is generally hilly and the hill ranges run from North to South. The highest peak called Saddle Peak has a height of 2,400 feet and is situated in North Andaman. The larger islands have very irregular shore lines something forming some of the best harbours in the world. Most of the islands are lacking in perennial sources of water such as streams, rivers, lakes, springs, etc.

One striking feature of the islands is their greenery as they are all covered with thick evergreen tropical forest. The islands are singularly lacking in large carnivorous mammalian types. The climate is generally warm and moist tempered by cool sea-breeze. The distance between Calcutta and Port Blair is about 780 miles (1,250 kms.) and that between Madras and Port Blair is about 740 miles (1,190 kms.). Cape Negrais in Burma is 120 miles away from the nearest island while Sumatra is 340 miles away from Great Nicobar, the last island of the Archipelago.



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

*A. Andaman*

The earliest references to these Islands, it is claimed by some authors, are in *Ramayana*. The origin of the name, Andaman, has been traced to Hanuman, the monkey god of Hindu mythology. The Malaysian word for Hanuman is Handaman and the latter have given this name to the islands, perhaps believing the aborigines to be the descendants of the monkey god. It must be remembered that Malays have, for many centuries in the past, used these islands for piratical activities and trade in Andamanese slaves (Census of India 1931: 5).

The islands have been mentioned by Ptolemy (2nd century), Chinese Monk I T'Sing (7th century), two Arab travellers (9th century), Marco Polo (13th century), Friar Odoric (early 14th century), Nicolo Corti (early 15th century) and numerous other travellers during 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. These accounts indicate that the islands were all along feared and avoided. It seems the shipwrecked or crews of ships that came in search of fresh water or to take shelter from stormy weather were generally slain and the ships looted and destroyed.

One important result of this contact with foreign ships and people for the Andamanese was that they—a hunting and food gathering people—learnt the use of iron. For centuries now they have been making use of iron for making their tools.

*The Settlement* : It was in 1788 that Lord Cornwallis, the then Governor General of British India, sent Lt. Colebrook and Lt. Blair to survey these Islands for purposes of colonization. The idea was to establish a penal colony and to check the activities of Malay pirates and to ensure the safety of British ships and their crew plying on this route.

In 1789, a free-settlement was established on Chatham Island in Port Blair (then Port Cornwallis). In 1792, the settlement was shifted to present Port Cornwallis on north-east coast for its 'vastly superior harbour'. The decision was disastrous as the place proved very unhealthy so much so that the settlement had to be abolished altogether.

It was in 1857 after the Indian mutiny, that the British Government decided again to establish a Penal Settlement at Port Blair. The first prisoners were brought here in 1858 under the charge of Dr. Walker.

The coming of the British and the Indians was resented by the Andamanese and they fought and resisted the settlement for many years later. It took the British lot of time and effort to pacify the major groups of aborigines and to win their goodwill.

The Islands (including Nicobars) passed under the Japanese occupation during the Second World War for about three years from 1942 to 1945. The Penal Settlement was finally abolished in 1945 and the colony

was declared a free colony. In 1947 the Andaman and Nicobar Islands became part of the Indian Union.

*The Aborigines* : As far as can be traced the Andamanese (the tribes of Andaman) have been known to be living in these islands for ages. It is difficult to say anything about their origins. However, it may be said that they belong to Negrito stock and they have considerable ethnic affinity with two other aboriginal communities, namely the Semangs of Malaysia and the Aeta of the Philippines. But it has not been possible to establish any linguistic relationships among them, as the latter have forgotten their own dialects, having taken up the languages of their dominant neighbours.

### *B. Nicobars*

The Nicobars, like the Andamans have been known to the travellers and authors from ancient times. Apart from the supposed reference to them in *Ramayana*, the Islands have been mentioned in their accounts among other, by Ptolemy (2nd century), I T'Sing (7th century), Arab travellers (9th and 13th century), Marco Polo (13th century) and Friar Odoice (early 14th century). During the 11th century some of the islands are believed to have been part of the overseas kingdom of Chola king of Tanjore as indicated by an inscription of that date. During the 15th, 16th and 17th centuries the Islands were visited by Portuguese and French missionaries to do evangelistic work. From 1756 to 1946 Danish East India Company and Danish Government made several, rather unsuccessful, attempts to colonize and christianize the Islands. In 1869, however, the British took formal possession of the Islands with the aim of putting down the piratical activities of Nicobarese and also to checkmate the growth of a rival naval power in such close proximity to the Andaman Islands, by then an established British settlement.

The British established a penal settlement at Nancowry (Central Nicobars) which was closed in 1888. But the possession of the Islands was not given up. They were administratively linked up with the Andamans and this state of affairs continues till now.

The Nicobarese are a Mongloid people and are known to have been living in these islands as far back as can be traced. However their past links, both ethnic and cultural, with other Mongoloid people in south-east Asian region cannot be questioned.

Though they show appreciable differences of dialect among themselves, the basic links of their language are reported to be with the Mon-Khmer group of languages as spoken by various people in Malaysian Peninsula and Cambodia and the link can be extended to the Khasi of Assam.

## THE ANDAMANESE—HUNTERS AND COLLECTORS

In 1858, when the British established themselves in these Islands, the aboriginal population in the Andamans was estimated to be around 5,000. This has since shown a sharp decline and only a few hundred remain today (see Table 1). This is in sharp contrast with the situation in the Nicobars where the aboriginal population has maintained a steady growth even after close contact with outsiders (see Table 2). The downward trend in the aboriginal population in the Andamans had caused worry to the local Administration towards the turn of the century.

Table 1. Estimated population of the various Andamanese tribes from 1901 to 1961.

Census year		1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961	P O P U L A T I O N
T	Great Andamanese	625	455	209	90	23	19	
R	Onge	672	631	346	250	150	129	
I	Jarawa )		114	114	70	50	—	
B	)	585						
E	Sentinelese )		117	117	50	—	—	
S								

The local gazetteer, Andaman & Nicobar Islands (1908) notes:

The cause of diminution of the population is infectious and contagious disease, the result of contact with higher civilization. Epidemics, all imported, of pneumonia (1868), syphilis (1876), measles (1877) and

1 The predominant population of the Andamans today consists of the settlers, the people, mostly of Indian origin who have been coming and settling down here since 1868 when the Penal Settlement at Port Blair was established by the British. They came first as convicts but later immigrants are free settlers. There is a highly mixed population representing all parts of India and including a small number of Burmese also. Most of them are cultivators, some work as labourers in government and non government organizations and others follow sundry trades including government service. Their total population in 1961 was around 45,000. The original settlers the convicts and their descendants are referred to as local Indians. The notable groups are Bhandas (of Uttar Pradesh), Moplas (of Kerala), Bengalis (refugees from East Pakistan), South Indians from Kerala, Madras and Andhra, and the tribals from Bihar. Most of them have even after migration, continued to maintain their respective ethnic identities. The settlers are settled mostly in South, Middle and North Andamans.

influenza (1892) together with exposure to the sun and wind in cleared spaces, the excessive use of tobacco (but not of intoxicants) and over clothing, have been the means of destroying them. It is disease that has worn down the actual numbers of the tribes in contact with civilized men to a fifth in one generation, and has apparently rendered the union of the sexes infructuous in three-fourths of the cases.

The Andaman Islanders, though showing considerable racial affinity, are divided into several groups because of the differences of language and culture. The two main divisions can be spoken of as the Great Andaman Group and the Little Andaman Group. The divisions are based on the marked differences of language and certain differences in the material culture and customs of the two groups with further variations in each group. The further divisions of the Andamanese can be tabulated (after Radcliffe-Brown 1948 : 13) as under:

### 1. Great Andaman Group (or Great Andamanese)

- A. Northern Group, including the tribes, Aka-cari, Aka-kora, Aka-Bo, Aka-Jeru.
- B. Southern Group, including the tribes, Aka-kede, Aka-Kol, Oko-Tuwol, A-pucikwar, Aka-Bale, Aka-Bea.

### II. Little Andaman Group (or Little Andamanese)

- A. Onge of Little Andaman.
- B. Jarawa of South and Middle Andaman.
- C. Sentinelese of North Sentinel Island.

The Andamanese are all food gatherers and hunters and sharing the same geographical environment. They exhibit a remarkable basic similarity in their way of life. There are, no doubt, considerable differences of language between the two groups and dialectical variations among the sub-divisions of each group. They also show certain differences in their material culture and some of their customs but these keep on decreasing as we proceed from the main groups to the smaller divisions in each one of them. However, whatever these differences are, appear to be just local variations of the same basic cultural pattern.

Of all the tribes of the Andamans, only those of the Little Andaman Group survive today as viable societies. Of the Great Andamanese, once the largest single group, only 19 members survive today (*Census 1961: 57*). However, being the best studied group, we shall take it up for a little detailed description as the representative group of the Andamanese. Brief references will be made later to the Onge, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese.



## GREAT ANDAMANESE

*Settlement Pattern and Subsistence Activities*

Among the Great Andamanese a tribe—a linguistic group with a common territory—was an aggregate of local groups, which in turn was a cluster of elementary families, not necessarily related. Each local group had a number of recognised camping sites within its own territory at one or the other of which its members would lie for the greater part of the year. The choice of the site was determined greatly by the existence of a supply of fresh water especially during the dry season.

The local groups were of two types, the coast-dwelling (*Aryoto*) and the forest dwelling (*Eremtaga*). In case of coast-dwellers, the camping sites were always near the sea-shore or a creek, so that these could be reached and left by canoe, the chief mode of transportation for them. They rarely stayed at a camp for more than a few months. The forest dwellers were relatively less nomadic because they had to carry their belongings on their own backs and not in canoes. They, therefore, preferred to stay for longer periods at the same place, particularly during the rainy season. During the cool and hot seasons they led an active life, moving more frequently and living in temporary hunting camps and paying visits to their friends in other camps.

The reasons for shifting camp were many, the most important being the need to move on to places of seasonal food supply as theirs was a perfectly parasitic existence on what nature might provide. The important sources of food for coast-dwellers were a variety of fish, crabs, prawns, molluscs, dugong and turtle—all obtained from the sea. These were supplemented by roots, seed, fruit and wild pigs from the forest. But for the forest-dwellers food came chiefly from the forest itself in the form of the wild pig and also civet cat, monitor lizard, snakes, rats and some insect larvae. They also collected roots, fruit and wild honey. Fish were caught in the inland creeks. Rainy season (May to September) was the time for pig hunting as this was the time when the pigs would be very fat and plump. Hunting party consisted of 2 to 5 men each carrying a bow and two or three pig-arrows. Dogs helped in scenting out the pig which was killed by arrows. Pig was brought to the camp and roasted on open fire. Meat was distributed among all the members who could cook it further. Small game if obtained in large quantities was also brought to the camp otherwise it would be consumed by the hunters on the spot.

While men were out hunting women and children went out to fetch water and to collect firewood, roots, fruits, etc. or weave baskets, nets and mats. Very old people were left to look after the babies. On days of leisure men would sit down to make and mend their bows, arrows, spears and other tools.

The season following the rains at the end of September brought forth plenty of lerve of cicada and beetles which were regarded as delicacies. The vegetable food at this time would also be plentiful. During the cool season

(November to March) fruit and roots would be in abundance and hunting was not very during this season. At this time visits would be paid to relatives and friends and also to the permanent encampments to check up the communal huts for repairs. Hot season (March to May) produced honey in abundance and thus became the main source of food. Just before the start of the rainy season jack-fruit ripened and was the main item of diet. The pulp was eaten and the seeds would be preserved by boiling and then buried in the ground for use during the rainy season.

The coast-dwellers were less affected by the changing seasons and kept on alternating between pig-hunting, fishing and turtle and dugong hunting. They would not stay in a camp for more than a couple of months. During the hot and cool seasons they would pay visits to relatives and friends in their camps. These visits had an important social purpose intensifying social integration.

The membership of the local group, among the Great Andamanese, was limited averaging about forty to fifty individuals of all age groups. The reasons for this were ecological, especially with respect to food resources, which could not support larger permanent groups. As mentioned earlier, there were two kinds of local groups—coast dwelling and forest dwelling. This division was again governed by the need to tap food materials from diverse sources. The coastal people thus leaned more heavily on resources from the sea and perfected their technology accordingly while the forest dwellers paid much more attention to the food resources within the forest and had to be very good hunters. The leadership among the Great Andamanese rested with men who were good at hunting and fishing and warfare and who were generous and kind in giving gifts and helpful in work.

### *The Onge of Little Andaman*

The Onge inhabit the Island of Little Andaman (area about 285 sq. miles) that lies south of the Great Andaman. Their present population is 129 which has been steady for the last decade or so. Their contact with the out-side world has not been so intense as those of the Great Andamanese. They differ from the latter in language and some aspects of their culture. But their settlement pattern and subsistence activities are similar to that of the Great Andamanese. They also have the communal huts and temporary huts and move about in their island in the same way during the same period in search of similar seasonal and daily food supply. So far as is known they are not, however, divided into coast-dwelling and forest-dwelling groups as was the case with the Great Andamanese. But they too have "local groups" with defined territories for hunting and collecting. Cipriani (1953: 79) has called these groups as "clans". "Inside each communal hut", says he, "lives what we must call a clan. The inhabitants admit origin from a common ancestor and are exogamous". This statement, however, needs verification.

*Jarawa of Great Andaman*

No accurate figures are available about the population of the Jarawas as it has not been possible to count them because of their hostility. For many years now they have been confined to a 300 sq. miles forest reserve on the western coast of south and middle Andaman. Being hostile for a long time, their area is cordoned off by check-post of Andaman Bush Police to keep them out of mischief towards the settlers.

It may be noted, however, that the Jarawa were not always so hostile. In fact they are reported to have been initially more disposed to friendly relations than the other Andamanese. But lack of effort and desire on the part of British Administration to establish friendly relations with them is the root cause of the trouble. First contact with the Jarawas was made by Colebrook and Blair in 1790. The former was able to collect a small vocabulary of their language. The British, for their own reasons, decided to be more friendly with the Great Andamanese Tribes that were hostile to the Jarawa. And this naturally created suspicions in the minds of the latter. Portman's observations in this behalf are revealing. "On our arrival the Jarawas were quite and inoffensive towards us, nor did they ever disturb us, until we took to continuously molesting them by inciting the Coastal Andamanese against them. After a few years of this disturbance, the life of the Jarawas became quite hard and they began to attack us." In 1872, occurred the first recorded raid of the Jarawa on the Settlement. Since then every year raids have been made by the Jarawas to obtain iron implements and also food stuffs and utensils.

They have also been attacking forest labourers and others. In 1969 at least two persons have been killed and few others were seriously injured.

*Sentinelese of North Sentinel Island*

North Sentinel Island is a small island (area 23 sq. miles) about 21 miles off the west coast of South Andaman. Again, because of their relative isolation and hostility we have no accurate figures regarding the population of the Island. Like other Andamanese the Sentinelese are a Negrito people and are culturally and ethnically closer to the Jarawa and the Onge. Because of geographical reasons the Island has not been visited much by visitors. The records indicate the Island was visited by Humfray (1867), Portman (1886) and Bonington (1926). The attempts of these people to establish friendly contacts with these people did not prove of much avail but they were able to make observations on their way of life.

Cipriani went round the island in 1954 but failed to land there. The island was again visited in 1967 by officers of the Andaman Administration (Pandit : 2). Again, it was not possible to establish any contact with the people though observations on their material culture were made.

The intensity of hostility of the Sentinelese towards outsiders is probably much milder than that of the Jarawas. If this supposition is true, the reasons must be historical. The Sentinelese have been left in relative peace in a separate island without being much disturbed. But the story of the Jarawas is different.

The Jarawas have constantly been in contact with the Settlers since the inception of the Settlement. Hence it should be easier to make friendly contacts with the Sentinelese than with the Jarawas.

The Jarawas, as far as we know, are closer to the Sentinelese than they are to the Onge. Their settlement pattern and subsistence activities cannot be very different from each other. Like the Onge the Jarawa also live in communal huts, but these are lacking in sleeping platforms. The Jarawas like the Sentinelese sleep on the floor. It is not clearly known if the Sentinelese have communal huts but their habitations have been observed to consist of clusters of upto 20 single huts built close to each other (Pandit 1967: 1-6). Though the Sentinelese are reported to have canoes the Jarawas do not have canoes but cross the creeks in rafts. The Onge travel long distances in their finely built single-outigger canoes. The Jarawas and the Sentinelese, like the Onge, may wear tassels or unlike the latter, go quite naked. The bow among the three tribes is similar, though those of the Jarawa and the Sentinelese may show decorations but it is unlike the S shaped bow as characteristic of the Great Andamese. Like the Onge and the Great Andamanese, the Jarawa and the Sentinelese too are food-gatherers and hunters. They hunt the wild pig and collect honey, fruits and tubers from the forest. Their mode of subsistence must necessitate a semi-nomadic existence. As the Jarawa and Sentinelese show varying degrees of hostility towards outsiders, they remain yet almost unstudied. Nor are any accurate figures of their population available. However, in 1951 Census the Jarawa population was estimated to be 50. The population of the Sentinelese was also estimated at 50 in 1931 Census.

#### THE NICOBARESE GARDENERS AND HERDERS

##### *Introduction*

The Nicobarese, numbering nearly 14,000 people (Census 1961: 57) are spread out in 157 villages in twelve islands of the Nicobars and thus forming what may be called the twelve Island communities with the Shompen, the interior tribe of Great Nicobar, forming a somewhat separate group. It is noteworthy that on the whole the Nicobarese, quite unlike the Andamanese who declined rapidly in the years following the British occupation of these Islands (in 1869) is a flourishing population and it has been growing at a steady pace as indicated by records since the beginning of 20th century. This will become clear from Table 2.



TABLE 2. Population of Nicobar Islands

Census Year	1901	1911	1921	1931	1951	1961
Population	6501	8818	9272	10240	12009	14563

(Source : *Census 1931, 1951 and 1961*).

The basic cultural and racial identity of the twelve Island communities is beyond question. But owing to various factors such as relative geographic isolation from each other, and the varying historical influences to which the various Islands have been subjected, to a larger or greater extent, the Island communities show differences from each other in cultural linguistic and racial terms. On the second basis, the Islands have been divided into six groups (refer to Table 3 for this section) though the geographical divisions are only three, known as Northern, Central and Southern. But the cultural divisions again correspond closely to the geographical divisions and, in fact, are only further categories of the latter. It can be assumed that due to great contacts between the people of contiguous Islands their sub-cultures show greater similarity with each other.

In Car Nicobar, the northernmost Island of the group, is concentrated over two-thirds of the total population of the Nicobarese. For this reason it may be considered the most important Island in the Nicobars.

Chowra (area 3 sq. miles) is the Island of potters and witch-doctors. It is also the Island with the greatest density of population. Owing to their traditional apathy towards all outsiders including the other Nicobarese they have never favoured anybody overstaying, not to speak of settling down in their Island. Of all the Nicobarese barring the Shompen, they are believed to culturally and ethnically the least affected by external influences. All Nicobarese obtain their earthen pots from Chowra by direct, or indirect trade arrangements. The Chowra people make pots but clay for the pots is brought from the nearby Island of Teresa as suitable clay is not available locally. The Chowra Island is also lacking in sweet water sources. Drinking water is also brought from Teresa. Manufacture of earthen pots is tabu in Islands other than Chowra.

Canoe is the other very important item of Island trade. Manufacture of Canoes is tabu in Car Nicobar, Chowra, Teresa and Bompoka. Tabu is partly sustained by the non-availability of the right kind of trees in large numbers for the purpose in these Islands. Canoes are made in the Islands of Camorta, Trinkat, Nancowry and Katchall (Central Group) and also in the Southern Group. Car Nicobarese are obliged to buy their canoes mostly through the Chowra people. The ceremonial travel by such a canoe to Chowra, for the first time, for the annual purchase of pots by every Car Nicobarese youth is a step towards his initiation into manhood. The Nicobarese in the Southern group also trade their canoes with the people in other Islands but the output

is not comparable to that in the Central group and the size of the canoes is small. But the Nicobarese in the Southern group have to pay royalty to the Shompen for cutting down the trees in their territory for making canoes. The Islands of Teressa and Bonitoka produce excellent tobacco and trade it with other Nicobarese. Manufacture of lime (chewed with betel nut and betel leaf all over Nicobars) is tabu in the Islands of Teressa and Chowra. They, therefore, import the commodity from the Islands to the Central Group.

The other items of trade are pigs, coconuts, tools, such as *dah* cloth etc. All trade is done by barter exchange. Trade is mostly done during the fair season when navigation is easy. The canoes start out on moonlit nights, laden with goods to return in good time with the other things needed. Navigation is helped by the very elementary knowledge of the stars that Nicobarese have. Inter island trade indicates a state of mutual help and dependence and in the process regular through infrequent, inter Islands contacts are also maintained.

#### *Settlement Pattern and Subsistence Activities*

The mode of adaptation of the Nicobares to their habitat has not only enabled them to maintain a steady growth of their population over the years, but also has made it possible for them to have very high concentrations of population in single Islands such as Car Nicobar and Chowra. This state of affairs has continued for a fairly long time and one of the very important factors responsible for this situation is their ability to domesticate plants as well as animals. In other words they have been able to have a productive kind of economy in contrast to that of the Andamanese which is purely acquisitive. Of course, the habitat and climate are such that these lend themselves admirably to some rather primitive techniques that the Nicobarese employ in the two kinds of subsistence activities.

It will be useful to describe Car Nicobar, the best known island of the Nicobars, at some length. Car Nicobar is 49 sq. miles of fertile land and compared to most other islands in the Andamans and Nicobars it is remarkably flat. The 1961 Census showed that it was peopled by nearly ten thousand Nicobarese, i.e. over two thirds of the entire Nicobar population. Its population has been showing an upward trend ever since 1901 when the first census was taken. That year the population was 3,652 (Shyam Choudhri 1955: 2).

The Settlement pattern of the Nicobarese is closely connected with their economic activities and together they are related to their social organization. "In the settlement area every homestead usually belongs to one household of related kins. The kins who form the household are genealogically related, and thus constitute a lineage group. This lineage is called *linan*. The *linan* and *linan* in this respect may be considered

identical" (Shyam Choudhri 1955 : 9). However, a large lineage may have more than one homesteads in a village constitute the village council. The head of the largest homestead which will often own the largest share of land will be the head of the village council. But he can retain his position only if he is able to look after the interests of his village with ability and honesty vis a vis other villagers, the administration and tradesmen and others.

#### THE SHOMPEN

The Shompen are the Mongoloid tribe living in the river valleys in the interior parts of Great Nicobar. About them our knowledge is very limited. But so far as is known, they appear to be a group somewhat apart both racially and culturally, from the rest of the Nicobarese. They are having friendly relations with the Nicobarese living in the coastal regions of Great Nicobar and there are trade relations existing between them. But in the past some of their groups used to be hostile towards the latter. On the whole they seem to fight shy of contacts with outsiders. In 1961 Census their population is given as 71. The members of the Great Nicobar Expedition 1966, were able to contact 100 of them and they estimated their population as 150 to 200 (Fall 1967).

They are not a sedentary people like other Nicobarese but a semi-nomadic people like the Andamanese. They move in groups, within the limits of their own respective territories, in search of game and plant products like pandanus. They live in huts built on piles usually 8 to 10 feet high and roofed over by areca palm leaves and the pandanus leaves. Houses are always built close to sweet water source, i.e. rivers.

With the help of digging stick they cultivate yams, pandanus, coco palms, areca palms, tobacco, bananas, etc. by making clearings in the forest and fencing it off against damage by pigs. The cultivation is, of course, on a much smaller scale and more primitive than among the other Nicobarese. Pig is found wild in Great Nicobar and the Shompen love to hunt it with their spears and their domesticated dogs. They do, however, keep domesticated pigs. They also hunt crocodiles, monkeys, fresh water fish (in rivers of Great Nicobar), snakes, frogs, birds and lizards. Besides they collect wild yams, bulbs, roots, fruit honey and larvae of insects.

The Shompen make small outrigger canoes (6 to 10 feet long) for use in the rivers. They also trade these with the coastal Nicobarese. They weave baskets from cane and spathe of areca palm. They also make very fine bark cloth from the inner bark of ficus. For a fairly long time now they have been using cloth also acquired through barter trade with coastal Nicobarese. Even their cook pot is prepared from pieces of bark arranged and fixed lengthwise in double folds on two vertical split poles. Inside it, a cane basket is placed for keeping the articles of food to be cooked.

Culturally the Shompen appear to be an intermediate group between the

Table 3. Geographical, cultural and linguistic divisions, number of villages, population and area, and density of the Nicobar Islands  
(Census 1931 : 66 and Census 1961 : 37)

Geographical Divisions	Cultural and Linguistic Divisions	Number of Islands	Number of villages (1961 figures)	Population (1961 figures)	Area (1961 figures in sq. miles)	Density (1961 figures)
A. Northern Group	I	Car Nicobar	16	9,879	49.0	202
	II	Chowra	5	1,233	3.2	385
	III	Teressa	11	547	39.1	14
		Bompoka	1	53	5.2	8
b. Central Group	IV	Katchal	45	904	67.3	13
		Camorta	23	795	72.6	11
		Trinkat	6	116	14.0	8
		Noncowry	15	539	25.8	21
	V	Pulo Milo	1	40	0.5	80
		Little Nicobar	16	182	61.4	3
C. Southern Group		Kondul	1	82	1.8	46
	VI	Great Nicobar	17	203	403.5	0.5
		Shompen area of Great Nicobar	—	71*	—	—
Total:	3	6	157	14,563	743.4	—

\* Figure included in population of Great Nicobar. Population estimated by Great Nicobar Expedition (1966) is 150 to 200.



Andamanese and Nicobarese. Whereas the Andamanese are food gatherers and hunters, the Nicobarese are gardeners and herders. The Shompen combine their food gathering and hunting with a bit of gardening and hording as well.

The Shompen were earlier believed to be "hostile" but in recent decades there has not been any signs of hostility towards other (coastal) Nicobarese or outsiders. In fact, there is economic cooperation between the two groups. It is true, however, that like most isolated groups with their own way of life they seem rather shy and not very keen on meeting other people. They prefer to retire to their own environs and run away, if pursued.

#### V. DISCUSSIONS

Radcliffe-Brown (1948 : IX) has referred to culture as an adaptive-mechanism by which "a certain number of human beings are enabled to live a social life as an ordered community in a given environment." Adaptation has two aspects, external and internal. The external adaptation has taken care of the maintenance institutions whereas the internal aspect covers the integrative institutions. Since the maintenance and integrative institutions are aspects of the same culture, the changes in one are bound to affect the other.

In the data we have presented above we have seen that various ethnic groups inhabiting the Andaman and Nicobar Islands have adapted themselves in somewhat different ways to a more or less similar geographical environments. This has led to growth of different kinds of economics and settlement patterns which in turn have given rise to different kinds of socio- political organizations. Witness, for instance, the food-gathering and hunting economy of the Andaman tribes which has led to their semi-nomadic existence and a very simple kind of social and political organizations. On the other hand, the Nicobarese with their gardening and herding technology are enabled to live a sedentary life in large and concentrated settlements. This in turn has given rise to a different pattern of social and political organizations.

That is not, however, to suggest that environment is a determining factor in the growth of human cultures far from that. An environment may only broadly limit the possibilities of human life but within these limitations it offers choices which may be exploited by societies within the framework of their technologies and cultural goals. Thus, sharing a common level of technology and a common environment the sub-cultures of the Andamanese group have given rise to similar economics among them. Same is the case with the sub-cultures of the Nicobarese group.

It has, however, to be remembered that environment does not influence culture as a whole but various aspects of it selectively. The economic systems, for instance, are obviously more closely tied up with habitat than any other aspect of culture. But the other aspects may be affected indirectly. Thus by geographically isolating groups speaking the same basic language new

dialects may be born. This has happened both among the Andamanese and the Nicobarese where different Island communities have given birth to different dialects which because of long years of isolation are not even intelligible to other similar groups though the basic structure of the language has remained unaltered.

#### QUESTION OF INTEGRATION

The tribes of Andaman and Nicobar present peculiar and characteristic problems with regard to question of integrating them with the mainstream of life in the Islands and in the rest of the country. From material point of view the problem has to be examined keeping in view the considerable strategic importance of the Islands and also the economic and social development of the region that is so relevant in the context.

We have here tribes who are either hostile or isolated or both that it is not possible even for the administration to function properly in their territories. Such is the situation with regard to the Jarawa and the Sentinelese in the Andamans and to a lesser extent with regard to the Shompen in the Nicobars. The Onge of Little Andaman though friendly and not so isolated are still far from being integrated with the wider society. The reasons for this state of affairs are many:

1. Geographical isolation.
2. Differential cultural levels
3. Linguistic differences
4. Physical dissimilarities
5. Historical factors

The geographical factor operates not only with regard to contact between tribal and non-tribal groups but also affects the inter and intra-tribal relationships. The tribes of Andamans for instance have little opportunity of meeting and knowing each other because of the distance and the sea that separates them. Similarly in the Nicobars most people do not have any opportunity of visiting other Nicobarese in other Islands. Over a long period of time the desire to know each other at a closer range has also died. This has led to all the linguistic and cultural differences that exist both in Andamans and Nicobars. Then again there is very little opportunity for the Andamanese, and the Nicobarese to know each other.

The other important factor is the so-called "primitivism" of the tribes. The Andamanese are a hunting and collecting people, the Nicobarese are gardeners and herders while most of the settlers are agriculturists. Obviously there are among them vast differences in style of life and world view that tend to work against integration.

The dominant groups seem either indifferent or concerned chiefly with their own supposed superiority. At best the attitude is one of curiosity for

the "exotic" mingled with feelings of pity and concern born out of ethnocentrism. This is true particularly of the situation obtaining with regard to the Andamanese.

Language could be a powerful weapon to win over the confidence and trust of these people. But unfortunately our knowledge of the tribal dialects is far from satisfactory. We know precious little about the Jarawa dialects. Anthropological Survey of India has only recently been able to collect a small vocabulary of the Jarawa. Our knowledge of the Onge dialects is still very meagre. We have vocabularies of South Andamanese and Central Nicobarese dialects preferred by Man (1823-1888). But a lot remains to be learnt about the Nicobarese dialects of the Southern and Northern Groups and also the changes in the Central groups dialect have to be studied.

I am glad to say that Anthropological Survey of Indian has just taken up the study of the northern dialect and the study is likely to be extended to other regions of Nicobar later.

Ethnocentrism sometimes finds expression in value judgements in terms of physical differences that exist between the tribal and non-tribal populations. Education is needed to remove any ideas nurtured by ignorance.

As explained earlier the peculiar history of these Islands is partly responsible for the relative isolation of tribal groups from the rest of the population. The contact with civilization over the centuries has not brought any happy results and hence the deep-rooted suspicions of the tribals for the outsiders. Malays in the earlier centuries used to remove the Andamanese forcibly for slave trade in south-east Asian Region. Contact with the British and the Indians brought displacement was, disease and decimation to the tribal populations. In Nicobars the European missionaries angered the Nicobarese by tactlessly trying to change their faith. The Japanese occupation during 1942-45 was marked by cruelty and utter disregard for local custom and way of life (Richardson: 1-34). It was, however, only after the British reoccupied the Islands in 1945 that the local Christian missionaries were able for the first time to convert large numbers of Nicobarese to their faith. The Church now provides the leadership to the Nicobarese in some important Islands of the region.

The contact with outsiders has confronted the tribal groups in the Andamans with the problem of physical survival. As noted earlier, of the several thousand Andamanese that existed at the time of British occupation only a few hundred remain today.

After 1947 when the Islands became parts of the Indian Union steps were taken for the economic development of these islands under various five year plans and naturally the tribal populations were not left out in the overall plans for development. Considerable work has been done both in Andamans and Nicobars with regard to development of communications

expansion of educational and medical facilities and other social security measures and growth of agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. But it is true that while major population of Nicobar have been benefited by these measures, the welfare programmes have left the Andaman tribes relatively unaffected. The present state of relations with the Jarawas and Sentinelese leave them out of any development measures that might have been possible barring some occasional gifts of tools, utensils and foodstuffs, etc. that may be dropped in their territory with a view to pacify them.

In Little Andaman a dispensary and a primary school have been opened. The Onge are making occasional use of the dispensary but hardly care for the school. The Agriculture department have also established a coconut plantation in the island. There are plans to construct some large huts for their use. The small population of Great Andamanese are scattered over South and Middle Andaman. On the suggestion of the present author the Administration got the One and Great Andamanese population surveyed by medical teams. But this will not be of much use unless follow-up action is taken. The Administration has also accepted suggestion of this author to rehabilitate the 26 surviving Great Andamanese in a single village. The latter are very keen on it. The scheme is likely to be implemented during the Fourth Plan. Several schemes have been drawn up for implementation in the Nicobar region during the Fourth Plan. The more important of these are:

- (1) Development of coconut and arecanut plantations in Car Nicobar
- (2) Permanent settlement of 50 families of Car Nicobar in other Islands
- (3) Improvement of housing conditions
- (4) Additional facilities for education and sports
- (5) Supply of poultry birds to people
- (6) Improvement of water supply

There are, of course, other vast schemes for the general development of these Islands and naturally these are going to affect the tribal populations in no small measure.

It seems that Government of India are putting a lot of emphasis on the development of these islands from the strategic point of view. The military importance of these Islands arising from their peculiar geographical position cannot be over emphasized.

Government has drawn up a plan for "accelerated development" of these Islands which visualizes doubling of the present population of the Islands (under 1 lakh) by the end of the Fifth Plan. With this aim in view schemes have been drawn up to rehabilitate underpopulated islands with people brought from the mainland. This will involve suitable growth in the economy so as to create 88,000 additional jobs during this period. There will be considerable expansion on the agricultural and industrial fronts.

Already 69 families of ex-servicemen have been rehabilitated in Great



Nicobar out of a total target of about 200 families to be rehabilitated by the end of the next financial year. Similarly plans have been drawn up for the settlement of some 12,000 families in Little Andaman by the end of the Fifth Plan.

It has to be noted that both Little Andamans and the entire region of Nicobar were until recently free from settlers from outside. For the first time the Coastal Nicobarese and the Shompen of Great Nicobar and other Nicobarese and the Onge of Little Andaman are going to come into intimate contact on a permanent basis with people from the mainland. This is going to create a new situation for the tribal people and special care is needed to safeguard the legitimate interests of the latter and to create harmonious relations between the aborigines and the settlers.

#### SUGGESTIONS

(1) *Biological Survival*: Special attention needs to be paid to the problem of health and disease of the tribals. Introduction of a new population sometimes leads to spread of diseases with which the tribal people may not be familiar and against which they may have no protection. Prior measures need to be taken to check this.

(2) *Economic Situation* : Induction of a new population may sometimes lead to encroachments on the traditional sources of food and other needs of the tribal people without the latter having any alternative source. This has to be guarded against. Tribals are not likely to change their traditional modes of life in too short a time. Nor should anything be done to reduce them to the status of abject beggars by creating needs which they will not be able to fulfil on their own in the short run.

(3) *Social Adjustment* : The mere presence of an outside population will require the tribal people to make considerable social adjustments and affect their social life in various ways not necessarily advantageous to the latter. It is, therefore, essential to prepare them as far as possible for the change so that adjustment to a new situation becomes easier.

(4) *Administrative Arrangements* : The welfare and development projects in the Tribal areas should be handled by special administrative units which are staffed by well trained and hand-picked persons who perform their duties with a sense of devotion and show an awareness of and are sensitive to the tribal ways of life.

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B  
Social and Cultural Communication





# A Study of Tribe-Caste Continuum and the Process of Sanskritization Among the Bodo-Speaking Tribes of the Garo Hills

D.N. MAJUMDAR

## INTRODUCTION

Though social structures resembling caste are found in many parts of the world, it can be asserted that caste, as such, with all its characteristics, is a phenomenon peculiar to India only. I believe that the Hindu caste structure is a device by which groups at the periphery of Hinduism (tribes) are accepted into the greater Hindu society. At the outset a non-Hindu group (usually a tribe) is accepted at a lower rung of the caste hierarchy<sup>1</sup> with the stipulation that can claim gradually higher status by absorbing larger doses of sanskritization. My general hypothesis in this dissertation will be that the process of sanskritization<sup>2</sup> is intimately linked with the process of transformation of a tribe into a caste, or, in other words, its admission into the greater Hindu society.

The origin of the four *varnas*<sup>3</sup> of traditional Hindu society gave the castes a mark of occupational groups. After closely examining the castes in various parts of India, as they are functioning at present, many workers<sup>4</sup> have concluded that castes are occupational groups. It will be my endeavour to show here that the transformation of a tribal group into a group in the greater Hindu society with a distinct position in the caste hierarchy, may come about without any occupational specialization within the group or by the group as a whole. It will also be shown that admission into the caste hierarchy has been achieved entirely through the process of sanskritization.

With the theoretical background outlined above, I carried out investigations among a series of groups, which may be said to form a tribe-caste continuum. My investigations were focused on the Garo Hills district of Assam. Now I shall give a short and general account of the groups studied by me for this purpose. The Garo Hills district can be divided into two distinct geographical regions: (i) a hem, the width of which varies from less than a mile to about fifteen miles, covering entirely the northern,

western and southern borders of the district. This hem consists of fertile, flat land suitable for permanent agriculture. These flat lands may be taken as the last portions of the Brahmaputra valley meeting the Meghalaya plateau; (ii) the hilly central region which is the western half of the Meghalaya plateau. There are flat lands suitable for permanent agriculture in this region also, but these plains are not contiguous to the plains of the Brahmaputra valley, while the plains of the hem are co-terminous with the plains of the surrounding districts, i.e. the Goalpara district of Assam and the Mymensingh district of East Pakistan.

Each of these two regions has its own peculiarity as regards demography. The fertile plains of the border areas are occupied mainly by more or less sanskritized groups, the Rabha, the Boro, the Koch, the Hajong, the Dalu and the Hindu Garo (about whom I shall have occasion to say later), interspersed by a few villages inhabited by Christian and Songsarek Garos.<sup>5</sup> These Garo villages were established only a few generations back, either by the Garos from the nearby hilly areas, coming down to the plains in search of land suitable for permanent cultivation or by the Garo migrants from East Pakistan, who always prefer to settle in the plains. The areas adjoining the plains of the Garo Hills in the districts of Goalpara and Mymensingh are inhabited by the same groups of people, with the exception that in the areas of the latter two districts these groups live side by side with Hindu groups (mostly lower caste Hindus, such as *namasudra*, *inajhi*, etc. though a few higher caste Hindu households, mainly Brahmins are also to be found) and Muslims. The central highlands are inhabited exclusively by the Songsarek and Christian Garos. Thus the plains surrounding the central highlands can be described as a buffer-zone excluding the Garos (who were all Songsarek before British occupation) from the Hindu and Muslim influences of the surrounding districts.

Among the groups named above, the Rabha (excepting some sections), the Boro and the Koch (excepting some sections) speak various languages of the Bodo group of the Tibeto-Burman sub-family. The Hajong, the Dalu, some sections of the Rabha and some sections of the Koch have now adopted Indo-Aryan dialects of the neighbouring areas. However, there are grounds to believe that these groups also, a few generations ago, spoke languages of the Bodo group.<sup>6</sup> It is remarkable to note that Garos of the Meghalaya plateau also speak dialects of the same group—thus linguistically all these groups, sanskritized or not are kindred people. Though no detailed study of the racial characters of all these groups has so far been made, from a general observation it can be said that the mongoloid features are found in different proportions in different groups.<sup>7</sup> In short, it can be said that all these groups come under the same ethno-linguistic class.

MEANING OF THE TERMS 'TRIBE', 'CASTE'  
AND 'SANSKRITIZATION'

The main concepts around which this dissertation has been developed are 'tribe', 'caste' and 'sanskritization'. It is necessary, at this stage, that I should state clearly what I precisely mean by these terms. No clear-cut definition of the term 'tribe' can be found.<sup>8</sup> However, here by this term I mean a homogeneous group of people (culturally and linguistically showing some amount of homogeneity) which do not claim themselves as followers of any of the major religions of India, such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, etc. The amount of claim as belonging to any major religion varies in inverse proportion in describing the group as a tribe. Now, this definition is not a general definition of the term tribe as such. However, this definition fits well with the situation of north-east India, with the exception of groups which have comparatively recently adopted Christianity. Thus the Meitheis of Manipur are not a tribe, as they claim themselves as full-fledged Hindus and follow all the religious practices of a particular Hindu sect. The main difficulty with the present definition is that it excludes all the Christians from the connotation of the term 'tribe'. The only important criterion shared by converted and non-converted people of this region is that both speak some non-Aryan language. In other respects, in general economic condition as well as in some important cultural aspects, these converted people have raised themselves to the level of surrounding non-tribal populations.<sup>9</sup> And, I feel very strongly that these sections are regarded as tribes due only to the general misconception that once a group is considered as a tribe, it should remain as such for ever.

By 'caste' I mean here an endogamous group, which has gained some position in the Hindu hierarchy, topped by the three high castes—Brahmin, Kshatria and Vaishya, the higher position of these three castes being never contested by any other castes.

By 'sanskritization' I mean the elements by accepting which a non-caste group (tribal group) gets acceptance in the Hindu society and which give vertical mobility to a group which has already been accepted in the Hindu society.

ALIGNMENT OF THE GROUPS IN THE  
TRIBE-CASTE CONTINUUM

By applying the above definitions the Songsarek Garo can be described as a tribe *par excellence*. They have absorbed no element of sanskritization. They do not claim themselves as Hindus nor do they have any position in the caste hierarchy. On the other hand, Dalus can be described as a full-fledged caste absorbing maximum amount of sanskritization. They claim

themselves to be Hindus of the Bengali Vaishnava sect and though they have not achieved a high-caste status, they themselves regard their position as higher than that of other neighbouring sanskritized groups. Thus the groups Songsarek Garos and Dalus represent two opposite poles of the tribe-caste continuum. The other three groups occupy intermediate positions, though the position of each of these intermediate groups is not absolute.

The three groups—the Rabha, the Koch and the Rajong, also represent three self-contained continua, ranging borderline cases between tribe and caste to pure castes, almost equivalent in status with the Dalu. I am showing below the range of each of these groups comprising of different gradations of sanskritization among the various sections. On the top of each column I have placed the most sanskritized sections and on the bottom the least sanskritized sections. Thus the bottom section of each represent the borderline cases and the top section of each the section which has achieved caste status.<sup>10</sup>

Rabha	Koch	Hajong
Pati/ Kocha <sup>11</sup>	Chapra	Hajong
Dahori	Sathari	Khatal
Maitori	Song/Tintekiya	
Rongdani	Wanang	

Here it is necessary to mention the case of Hindu Garos. Some Garos of the Mymensingh district who were formerly Songsarek, were converted to Hinduism by a Bengali religious reformer within the memory of the present generation. Like the Dalu they claim themselves as belonging to the Bengali Vaishnava sect and all the aspects of sanskritization accepted by the Dalu have also been accepted by the Hindu Garo. They are also served unconditionally by Brahmin priests. Thus they now represent a caste in the level of the top sections of the three groups—Rabha, Koch and Hajong. Taking the Hindu Garo into account we can now make a gradation like this :

Hindu Garos  
Songsarek Garos

The peculiarity of this sequence is that the sequence comprises of two sections only (like the Hajong), but the two sections represent the two opposite poles of the tribe-caste continuum.

The elements of sanskritization are however not measurable quantities, so it will not be possible to place all the sections of all the groups in a definite tribe-caste sequence.

#### THE PROCESS OF SANSKRITIZATION

The process of sanskritization starts with the simple claim of the group as being members of the greater Hindu society. This varies in direct proportion



with the abandonment of the 'unclean' 'non-Hindu' habits, the foremost of which is beef-eating. The 'unclean' habits can be graded thus:<sup>12</sup>

- (i) Beef-eating
- (ii) Keeping of pigs and fowls
- (iii) Eating of pork and fowl

As sanskritization advances the group in question gives up these unclean habits one by one. Abstaining from beef-eating is an indication that the group in question wants acceptance in the Hindu society. And neighbouring Hindus accept the group more and more as they give up all these unclean habits. The Rongdani section of the Rabha is a case in point. They have developed the usual abhorrence towards beef, and they look down upon the beef-eating Garos. They have not absorbed any other element of sanskritization, still they regard themselves as belonging to the Hindu society and they are recognized as such by their high-caste Hindu neighbours.

The second step of sanskritization is the abandonment or partial abandonment of non-Hindu deities and gradual adoption of deities of the Hindu pantheon along with their traditional rites. The rites to Hindu deities such as Kali, Durga, Sarswati, etc. are necessarily performed by a Brahmin priest. So the group must get itself accepted in the Hindu society first by abstaining from unclean habits in order to be served by Brahmin priests. So, the second step of sanskritization is conditional on the first step. However, having some non-Hindu deities, the rites of which are performed by a non-Brahmin caste priest is not objected to very much by the Brahmin priests.<sup>13</sup>

The next step of sanskritization which can be taken as the final stage is the abandonment of all the major elements of tribal social customs, such as the clan organization (which plays a very important part in the tribal stage) with all its ancillary aspects, such as matrilineal inheritance, uxori-local residence, a clan oriented kinship system, and taking up in their place the Hindu patrilineal complex. However, all the groups mentioned above have yet to go through this third stage of sanskritization completely. Perhaps this is true about most of the lower castes or partial castes in other parts of India.<sup>14</sup> Full acceptance of Hindu rites is regarded as an acumen of sanskritization. At the final stage of sanskritization a group abandons all traces of its pre-sanskritized birth, death and marriage customs and adopts the traditional Hindu rites performed by a professional Brahmin priest.

The process of sanskritization can be considered as complete when the group abandons its non-Aryan language in favour of an Aryan language. However, this step of Aryanization can precede any of the three stages described above; the Khatal section of the Hajong are purely Aryanized in language, though they are yet to cross the third stage of sanskritization. As regards the two very important aspects of sanskritization, endogamy and observance of

strict rules of commensality I found the position of these groups rather peculiar. Usually linguistic groups are endogamous —this is true perhaps for other parts of the world also. Cases of caste endogamy crossing the barriers of linguistic group endogamy (nay, even dialectic group endogamy) are very rare even in the high caste Hindu society, considering the fact that Brahmin and the two other high castes are found among all linguistic groups of India. This linguistic endogamy or dialectic endogamy is found in tribal linguistic and dialectic groups even among the non-sanskritized groups. Thus, among the Garo such dialectic groups, as the Atong, the Ruga, the Chisak, the Awe, the Abeng, etc. are mostly endogamous. However, the strictness of endogamy varies in proportion to the dialectic differences. Thus the dialectic differences between the Rongdani and the Maitori Rabhas are very slight so the frequency of inter-marriages between these groups is rather large. Thus, it is not very much relevant, as far as these groups are concerned, in the process of sanskritization. However, its bearing on the process of sanskritization could have been tested had there been any relaxation of endogamy in case of the marriage of a member of a sanskritized group with one of an established Hindu caste. But such cases are non-existent as the established castes bar all marriages with any of these groups. The groups by themselves are endogamous, irrespective of the stages of sanskritization in which they are, and also the various sections of the groups are also endogamous as these sections are dialect groups (excepting, however, the cases of Khatahs and Hajongs, and Satbari Koches and Chapra Koches, all of whom speak a mixture of Assamese and Bengali). But cases of intermarriage between sections of the same group are rather common, as the dialectic differences between them are not much.

Unlike endogamy rules of commensality appear to be the attribute of sanskritization. A tribe, as such, does not observe any rules of commensality.<sup>15</sup> But at the very first stage of sanskritization they strictly prohibit inter-dining with those groups which have not abandoned the 'unclean' habits (specially beef-eating). So, this attribute can be taken as a corollary to the first state of sanskritization. As regards commensality, there is a distinct line dividing the groups which claim as Hindus from the groups which are not Hindus (i.e. tribal groups, Muslims and Christians). But between the sanskritized groups themselves, it was observed that the rules of commensality varies in proportion with the rules of connubiality. Ideally, each endogamous group is also the group within which inter-dining is confined. However, dining in the house of a member of a section of the same group, with which inter-marriages are frequent, or at least tolerated, is not regarded as a very serious transgression of caste rules. It is also to be noted that on social occasions such as marriage feasts such inter-dining between different sections even of the same group is not allowed.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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# NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Ghurye, G. S., *Caste and Class in India*, Bombay, 1905, pp. 119 et. seq.
2. I have followed Prof. M.N. Srinivas in using the term 'sanskritization' in preference to terms 'Hinduization' or 'Brahmanization'. M.N. Srinivas, *Caste in Modern India and Other Essays*, Bombay, 1962, pp. 42 et. seq.
3. Manu, X.4. Kewal Motwani, *Manu Dharmasastra: A Sociological and Historical Study*, Madras, 1958, p. 52.
4. e.g. Nesfield and Ibbetson. Recently in his dissertation on Caste in India, Dr. Sinha defines caste as "A hierarchy of endogamous groups, organized in a characteristic division of labour". Surajit, Sinha, "Caste in India : Its Essential Pattern of Socio-Cultural Integration", *Caste and Race : Comparative Approaches*, ed. Anthony de Reuck and Julie Knight, London, 1967.
5. Songsarek is the term applied by the Garo to indicate the section following the traditional Garo religion, and thus the term excludes the Garo Christians as well as Garo Hindus.
6. *Census Report of Assam*, 1881, Chapter VI.
7. B.M. Dass, *The Ethnic Affinities of the Rabhas*, Gauhati, 1960, pp. 100-16.
8. Waber's definition of the term 'tribe' includes the following elements: (i) a fixed territory, (ii) lack of occupational specialization, (iii) lack of social ranking with reference to a larger community, (iv) presence of a political association, (v) presence of exogamous sibs but no clear-cut endogamy of the tribe as a whole, (vi) absence of commensality rules. Max Waber, *The Religion of India* (The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism), Illinois, 1958, p. 31.
9. *Report of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*, 1966-69 (16th Report), para 1.40. If we want to include the converted sections in the connotation of the term tribe, we will have to narrow down our definition thus: homogenous groups who do not claim themselves as Hindus. By this narrowed down definition all the converted Garos, Khasis, Nagas, etc. will come under the term tribe, and also the Monpal, who are Buddhists, but not the Pnar, who claim themselves as Hindus.
10. These gradations are mainly based on the information contained in the following papers: (i) D. N. Majumdar, "A Note on Hajong Marriage", *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India*. Vol. XVII, Nos. 1-2, 1968. (ii) D.N. Majumdar, "A Study of Religious Practices among the Song Koch of Garo Hills", *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol. XVII, Nos. 1-2, 1968. (iii) D. N. Majumdar, "An Account of Magico-Religious Rites and Beliefs of the Rongdani Rabha", *Bulletin of the Anthropological Survey of India*, Vol. XVII, Nos. 3-4 1968

11. The Kocha Section can hardly be represented in the Rabha column. It is not known how they come to be affiliated to the Sabha; they have a clan organization common with the Koch, rather than with the Rabha.
12. Waber also observed similar stages. Waber, *op. cit.*, pp. 9-10.
13. Prof. Mathur's observations, in a Malwa village correspond to my observations, K.S. Mathur, *Caste and Ritual in a Malwa Village*, Bombay, 1964, p. 167, p. 169.
14. Julius Jolly, (tr. Batakrishna Ghosh), *Hindu Law and Customs*, Calcutta, 1928, pp. 134, 147.
15. Jolly, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 *et. seq.*



# The Tribes of Assam: A Few Comments on their Social and Cultural Ties with the non-Tribes

B.B. GOSWAMI

In this paper I propose to deal with the socio-cultural relations between the tribes and non-tribes of Assam who live in varied ecological conditions, with their different economic organizations—linguistic groupings, social structures and religions. This exercise may help us to understand the nature and degree of articulation/isolation of the tribal communities with/from the larger communities of Assam.

The State of Assam consists of two valleys—the Brahmaputra and Surma, and the hills. The hills separate the valleys as well as surround them. The tribes live in the hills and valleys; non-tribes mostly live in the plains.

Many of the tribes and non-tribes are immigrants and have entered the state in successive waves either from the neighbouring countries or from the Indo-Gangetic plains. Large settlements of Hindu Nepali population, seen in the remote areas of the hill districts could be ascribed to the British Military rule.

The tribes living in the hills and the valleys speak dialects of the Monkhmer and the Tibeto-Burman language family. The Khasis and the Synteng of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills belong to the Monkhmer group. The Tibeto-Burman group of languages is distributed all the over hills and plains of Assam. They are usually divided into three groups, namely, Naga, Kuki-chin and Bodo. The first two groups largely live in the hills but the Bodo dialect is spoken by a large number of tribes, who are settled in the plains as well as in the hills of Assam. The language belonging to Siamese-Chinese group is spoken by the Phakials, the Khamatis and a few members of the Ahom. Assamese is the language of the large number of non-tribes of the Brahmaputra valley and Bengali of the people of the Surma valley. The secondary language of the tea garden labour and the people of the hills and plains is Hindi, Assamese and Bengali.

Many of the hill tribes practise only shifting cultivation. There are also tribes who along with shifting cultivation practise settled cultivation and hunting. Non-tribes look upon settled cultivation as a way of life. There are communities practising inland fishing; some of the non-tribes are engaged in

specialized occupations such as pottery and blacksmithy.

The non-tribes are patrilineal but the tribal society ranges from matriliney to patriliney. Many of the tribes are at various stages of transition. In the tribal societies descent also varies from unilineal to double descent system.

As regards religion, the tribals follow their age-old practices but a large number of hill tribals practice Christianity, and the tribes of the valleys associate themselves with Hinduism. The followers of Islam amongst the tribes are negligible. Buddhism, specially of the Mahayana type, has some following among the tribes of Assam. Non-tribes are largely Hindus.

#### LEGENDARY TIES

Assam was, as far as the legends and stories go, never cut off from the main traditions of India. The references to the people of Assam in the sacred books such as *Mahabharata* and *Puranas* is well known. The kings referred to in the epics belonged to the Mongoloid group, who were slowly brought within the fold of the Brahminical traditions. Many stories and legends are treasured by the Hindu non-tribes and tribes. For instance, the legend regarding the marriage of Rukmini (belonging to the Mishmi tribe) with Lord Krishna is a valued oral tradition of the tribe.

#### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

During the historical period we observe that the Pala (10th-12th century AD) kings of northern Bengal were Hinduized Bodo tribes. After two centuries we come across the Ahom, a Shan tribe of Burma, who ruled the northern Assam, after subjugating the tribal kingdoms of the Chutiyas and the Kacharis. At that time the large number of small territories of the tribes in the Brahmaputra valley were interacting with each other through warfare and internecine feuds. There is evidence of social and political intercourse among them, through inter-tribal marriages and social exchanges. The Ahoms followed them in these matters. The Ahom kings started taking Hindu names. In the eastern part of Assam, as historians report, the Koch tribes who occupied large tracts of Brahmaputra valley and its adjoining hills were the followers of Hinduism and worshippers of Shiva and Durga. Through them the plain tribes such as the Mech learnt the worship of Hindu gods and goddesses. A Koch king of the 16th century not only saved Hinduism from a Muslim iconoclast but also made the tribes of the Jaintia Hills worship Hindu gods. Another important tribal kingdom was of the Kachari tribe. The Kachari kings during their rule constructed many Hindu temples and shrines. The consistent desire of the Ahoms to annex more territory resulted in breaking up of the Kachari kingdom. During the early 18th century the Ahoms were 'the masters of the Kacharis and also of the Khasis (Jaintias)'. But immediately

after this triumph, the rule of Ahoms on the plains of Brahmaputra valley and adjoining hill areas gradually declined and the Burmese kings took occasional control of the land, and subsequently the State was incorporated into British India.

The relationship of the Ahoms with the NEFA tribes and the tribes of the plains and hills of Assam is generally better known. This is because of the availability of *Buranjis* (chronicles) and the historians have made use of them. The relationship of the Ahoms with the tribes was generally of conciliation and sympathy during the time of peace.<sup>1</sup>

In the remote hills chiefs were supposed to be ruling their own territory. But as their confrontation with the people of the plains was not considerable and as those chiefs never maintained chronicles (excepting Ahoms and Manipur kings), their past is lost in the haze of antiquity.

The tribes of the plains, who had small territories all over the Brahmaputra valley, were exposed to the influences brought by people who came from northern Bengal and Burma and ruled over the country at different times. Miscegenation of the races in the plains and at the foot hills was never a taboo, but sometimes even encouraged. As is observed in Assam, non-tribes never ruled. The tribes or tribe-like communities always wielded political power in their hand. The impact of the British rule and the consequent political modernization creates elite groups among the non-tribes who took important lead in socio-cultural-political movements in the valleys.

Immigration of the caste Hindu non-tribals such as the Kalita, Keots, Brahmins from the west of Assam started from a very remote period, but they never ruled over Assam. Though faith in Shaktism is ancient, Vaishnavism has become the accepted religion of most of the Hindu non-tribes. The teachings of the Vaishnava *gosains* attached to a number of *satras* (monasteries), developed and organized at different places of Brahmaputra valley, control the morality, world-view and ethics of many. Many of the tribes who are living in the foot hills are closely associated with these monasteries, so much so that a few rebellions were said to have been organized in the past by them to crush those who insulted their spiritual leaders. The role of *satras* in integrating tribes and non-tribes is a fascinating field for social science research in Assam. However, the teaching of the *satras* have never deeply touched the hill tribes living in the interior.

The hill tribes of Assam continued to practise their own religious beliefs and practices in their own way. Taking the Mizo hills into consideration, we find that the first historical mention of the hills dates back to 1777, the days of Warren Hastings, in which it is mentioned that Mir Kasim in 1760 had handed over the land to Lord Clive. Except this no historical reference of their contacts with the non-tribes is available. The tribes living in the borders of the district are slightly affected by the beliefs of the Hindus and Buddhists. But what is the extent of such influence is yet to be measured by social scientists.

The nature of exposure as the hill tribes to the outside people can be more explicitly stated when we come to the British period. During pre-British days the contacts of the plains people with the hill tribes of Mizo hills, Naga hills, NEFA, etc. were mainly through the raids which the hill people used to make on the plains or the war of subjugation which the kings of the plains used to undertake for annexing areas. This came to an end during the British times. Whenever the British took punitive expeditions, they established outposts. They generally followed the policy of controlling the hill areas by a force of military police garrisoning posts in the interior which were largely manned by Nepalis. They were followed by the Bengali, Assamese and Hindi-speaking clerks, coolies and explorers such as the members of Trigonometrical Survey of India. To cater to their material needs followed a number of Marwari, Assamese and Bengali traders.

#### TRADE AND ECONOMY

There are many traditional centres of trade, such as at various '*duars*' (gates), where the tribes and non-tribes engage in barter, cash transactions, etc. The month long 'Darang Fair' in Kamrup district is an important centre where the non-tribes of various religions and creeds interact with the neighbouring Bhotias. Such fairs were patronized by the visits of the royal personalities. Many such centres have developed into markets. During peace time tribes deliberately ignored the boundary demarcations of their respective governments and paid visit to such markets situated even on foreign land. The markets of Tiddim and Falam in Burma, situated a few miles away from the Indian border are visited by the Poi, Mizo, Lakher and other tribes of India. Such markets are nearer and dearer to them, for a visit to the Aijal or Lungleh markets takes more of their time and energy. A network of such markets abounds in the plain areas. Hindu non-tribes in many of their centres of fairs and festivals have developed such trade centres.

The Marwari, Bengali and Assamese merchants dominate the wholesale business even in the tribal areas, for these non-tribes have better links in the plains than hills. However, owing to the recent policies of the government some local business and contractors have come up in the hill areas, where Christianity and education are dominant. A study of the trade centres at important urban areas of the hills, and of the life of a new few tribal entrepreneurs may help us to find out the new developing areas of cooperation and competition in this field of interaction. In many of the hill tribal areas, there are areas where permanent settled cultivation is practiced. In the Mizo Hills, it is the Santhal coolies (usually called by the Mizos as *midum*) who first undertook the work of plough cultivation in the Champhai and Vanlaiphai area, under the British supervision. The Khasi of Shella do not undertake



paddy cultivation themselves, but they take the help of Garo, the Muslim, Nepali and others, whereas in the Khasi hills participation of tribes other than the Khasi is observed. In the Mizo hills no other than the Mizo organize and operate their agricultural activities.

Hunting is the subsidiary occupation of almost all the tribes. For hunting the help of tribes is invariably taken by the government officials and non-tribes. For instance, it has been reported that in the Khedah operations undertaken by certain Hindu Zemindars of the Mymensingh district (East Pakistan), the help of the Garos and the Hajongs was traditionally sought. But the tribes do not take the help of non-tribes in their hunting operations.

The impact of urbanisation on the hill tribe villages is not uniform. Whereas the Khasi and Mizo tribes generally show a change in their traditional outlook, the Mikir tribe of North Cachar and Mikir Hill villages remain traditional. This impact is related to the communication and religion. These tribes of the valleys living near the urban centres, are feeling the impact of the urbanisation profoundly, so much so that there is a change not only in the dress and religious observances, but in the language itself. Most of the Kacharis living around the city of Gauhati have forgotten their own tribal dialect and have adopted the Assamese as their own language.

#### KINSHIP AND MARRIAGE

When we examine the aspect of kinship and marriage among the tribes and non-tribes of the plains we observe that networks are spread over generally to a very small area and interactions in this aspect is very limited. All the communities are endogamous. But expectations are always there. We have already stated that inter-community marriages were not uncommon in the historical past and Indian mythologies also support it. The slaves captured by the adjoining NEFA tribes married the women of the tribe and their progeny spread the broken Assamese among the people of NEFA.

In the hill tribal areas, say the Khasi Hills, the rule is that a Khasi should marry a Khasi. Instances of such marriages as between a Hinduized Khasi and a Christian Khasi are negligible. But in the Mizo Hills, the present picture is completely different. Here the kinship and marriage are controlled by religion. Marriages between the tribes such as Hmar and Ralte, Poi and Lusei are not uncommon. As a matter of fact, intermarriages among the tribes are not deferred, if church does not stand in their way. Sometimes church denominations of two individuals may differ and that may stand in their way. The question of Hinduized Mizo does not arise for such a thing does not exist there. Marriage between the Christian and non-Christian Mizos is not appreciated, though the two groups might be living in the same district since long. The Chakma population, a Buddhist tribe living in the Mizo district

bordering Pakistan, is considered by the Christian Mizos as 'unwanted heathens'.

Marriages between individuals belonging to two different regions are very uncommon. Cases such as a Garo marrying a Mizo, a Khasi marrying a Naga, are almost limited to a few educated persons. Here mainly the language and the culture stand in the way. A few isolated cases where the non-tribes such as Bengali marrying a Khasi lady may be cited. But in almost all such cases after the marriage the non-tribe moves towards the tribal fold. Even Hinduized War Khasis, among whom Ramakrishana Mission has been working for long get themselves converted to Christianity when they marry Christians.

Among the non-Christian tribes in the plains, the picture is slightly different. They invariably marry within their groups and follow their traditions. But the plain tribes who are living near the urban areas are introducing certain changes in their ceremonies. For instances, the Bodo Sanskar Committee is simplifying marriages with less expenditure and time. Those tribes or sections of a tribe which have been completely absorbed in the Hindu fold are gradually taking the shape of caste. And their marriages are regulated within the groups, showing a difference to those of their brethren who are non-Hindus. Though many of the tribal communities are slowly being conquered by the Hindus without exerting any force, the details of the interactions between the Hindu non-tribes and the tribes, and the stages through which a tribe has to pass to become Hindu, need careful study.

#### RELIGION

The role of feudal chiefs, in influencing the tribes to embrace the religion of Hindu non-tribes, comes into play in many ways. In the past, when the non-Hindu kings embraced Hinduism, their subjects also followed them. It happened in Manipur. Almost the same thing happened when the Koch, Kachari and Ahoms ruled Assam. Before 1947, the Hajongs of the foot-hills of the Garo Hills followed suit, for they held the Hindu Zamindar of the adjoining Mymensingh district (East Pakistan) in high esteem. The role of the Vaishnava Brahmins, preachers, and *satras* played a great role in attracting tribes. In many places the community prayer halls (*Namghar*) of the Hindus are open to tribes and non-tribes. Now-a-days, the community festivals such as the *Saraswati-puja* and *Durga Puja* attract tribes to observe the mode of worship of the Hindus. Messianic (religious) movements and 'conversion by evolving fictions' also contributed to bringing non-tribes and tribes near to each other.

In the plains the involvement of the tribes with the fairs, festivals and temples is greater. The Madhaba temple at Hajo attracts not only the Hindus

but also the Buddhist people of Bhutan who come every year to attend the Darang fair. To the Bhotias, Hajo Temple enshrines the image of Lord Buddha. Such intermixture of religious faiths is very common in the sacred shrines of Assam. Thus any study of sacred institutions and the pattern of pilgrims will help in understanding the inter-relationship of ethnic groups and their faiths.

In the plains, interaction between tribes and Hindu non-tribes is intimate. The caste system in Assam is more flexible than that in other parts of India. Tribe to caste mobility is a continuous process since times immemorial. The *Satras* and *Namgarh* are the two important institutions which control the morality and ethics of the Hinduized tribes and non-tribes. It is interesting to point here that in some of these Vaishnava centres, the Brahmins have completely lost their control. In certain areas such as Barpeta in Kamrup district, even the sacred *mantras* used in marriage and other rituals have been translated into Assamese so as to facilitate the conducting of rituals without taking the help of Brahmin priests.

As a matter of fact, in the religion of non-tribes (Hindus) and tribes, whether of valleys or Hills, many common denominators can be observed. Anthropologists have shown that belief in the life after death, the figure of a guardian spirit, etc. are common tribes and non-tribes. The concept of moral retribution among Hindus has a parallel in the tribal belief. The Hindu way of anthropomorphising the planets and stars are observed in many of the tribes of Assam. The tribes of the plains and the foothills for centuries have been drawn into the Hindu myths and stories which have helped them to identify themselves with the Indian traditions. These have been reinforced by wearing certain symbols, recounting certain legends, participation in the fairs, festivals, and making religious pilgrimages in and outside the state of Assam.

Christianity is more popular amongst the hill tribes than in the plains. The Khasi and the Garos have had some trade contacts with the plains of Assam and Bengal. Through these contacts they were absorbing some of the cultural traits of the Hindus. But with the arrival of the Christian missionaries, the people, for various reasons, became apathetic towards the religion of the non-tribal Hindus. At the beginning the missionaries met with some resistance, but once they gained a foothold the conversion became easy. However, in the tribes such as Lalung, Mikir, Lakher, etc. the missionaries could not meet with complete success.

In the hills where Christianity is the dominant religion, the people are divided into two sections: Christian and non-Christian. The non-Christian and the Christian living in the same district (e.g. Mizo district) do not trust each other. During the last famine (*mautam*) in the Mizo Hills, the Chakma, a Buddhist tribe, made a complaint about their being neglected and deprived of economic assistance. Often the non-Christian Lakher and Poi tribes have made such complaints against the Christian elites of the Mizo district.

The tribal Christians hold that non-tribal Hindus abhor them for taking beef and that they consider them as non-Indians because of their religion.

When a tribe comes within the Hindu fold it is placed somewhere in the local caste hierarchy. When a tribe becomes Christian, he is 'segmented' into various denominations. In a small town of a hill district I observed in 1960 about six Christian churches, whereas there were only two in 1947.

An emerging trend has been the Christian tribes establishing links with their denominational centres of their religious faith spread all over India. The foreign missionaries are slowly leaving the country and they are being replaced by the local people. They get their training, in the studies of religion and divinity, from Serampore (West Bengal) and Poona. Certain churches in Assam are associated with the National Christian Council. As a member of the Council the church leaders are sometimes invited to participate in seminars and meeting where they exchange their views with other Indian Christians. Recently a few Mizos who were taken on conducted (government) tour to South India visited the important churches of South and met their leaders. These trends are helping the tribes to tie themselves with the secular Indian traditions. The churches which had discarded the celebration of traditional non-religious festivals, dance and music are reviving them.

#### CONCLUSION

In this paper I have tried to comment on certain important aspects of socio-cultural interrelation between tribes and non-tribal Hindus. The content of this paper is of generalized nature, but the statements are based on the empirical studies made by the various scholars and on my field work among a hill tribe of Assam.

As Assam is inhabited by different types of races and cultures, ethnic mobility cannot be comprehended in one conceptual frame. The tribes are being integrated with the Hinduism or Christianity depending upon the dominant religion of the area. The tribe-caste continuum as observed in peninsular India is noticed in the valleys and near the foot-hills only, but is absent in the Mizo Hills of Assam.

Another important point to note is that in the valleys, tribes are largely in a process of moving into the caste society, barring a few instances where the growing feeling of tribalism is standing in the way of such mobility. Such mobility in the Brahmaputra valley is creating more 'Assamese'. In the hills some of the tribes whether Christian, or non-Christian, sometimes are not ready to identify themselves with the numerically dominant tribe of the region and their political aspirations. Only in the field of trade and economy tribes and non-tribes, whether living in the hills or in the valleys, are more inter-dependent on each other than in the fields.



## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Following Milton Singer, I may state that "the societal structure consists of the total network of social relations which connect the communities of different kind to one another over long periods of time....The cultural structure of a civilization is the structure of its ideas and the products of ideas." *The Social Organization of Indian Civilization*, Diogenes, 1964.
2. Migration of the tribes as well as non-tribes had taken a new turn when plantation and construction works were initiated by the British. No comment has been made in this paper about these people.
3. The tribes like the Kachari of the plains and Hills, the Khasi of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the NEFA tribes living adjacent to the Assam plains used to pay nominal royalties to the Ahom kings. On the other hand the Ahom kings allowed to the tribal chieftains the right to collect taxes from the people living in their area. Some of the tribal chieftains were even allowed to use even the subject families of the Ahom kings as labourers.

# Education, Social Change and Political Consciousness Among the Tribes of North-East India

S. M. DUBEY

Durkhiem considers education as a social institution that functionally promotes consensus and social integration in new generation through cultivation of those personal qualities that can further it as a social process.<sup>1</sup> Education is a potent agent not only for the social and psychological changes but it may influence productivity and economic development also, and, that is the reason why, for the last few years in the literature on development there has been much talk about the relationship between education and economic development and about education as investment.<sup>2</sup> Apart from the physical capital investment, non-physical factors such as health, research, knowledge, organization and administration, etc. play an important role in change and development.<sup>3</sup> Education will help in the socialization of a child and the development of human personality, social mobility, occupational change and the rise of professions;<sup>4</sup> it may increase productivity and economic development, as pointed out by Strumilin, Young, Schultz, and Denison.<sup>5</sup> A look on the tribes of the North-East India will reveal that from the point of view of industrial, technological or agricultural development, all of them are equally backward. But from the point of view of literacy the tribes of this region may be classified into two categories:

(a) In the first group we may include the Nagas, the Mizos and the Khasis among whom the percentage of literacy is comparatively higher, and, Christianity has made a marked impact on whose way of life.<sup>6</sup>

(b) In the second group—the Mikirs, the Garos, the Bodos, Kachharis, Miris and the most of the tribes of the NEFA may be included. The percentage of literacy is lower among these tribes and from the point of view of religion—these tribes may be divided into two sub-categories:

(i) those professing Hinduism; and

(ii) those having faith in the tribal form of worship.

An analysis of the socio-cultural life of these tribes will show that there is a positive correlation between conversion to Christianity, high percentage of literacy and social change and modernization. The British Administration, Christianity and modern education arrived simultaneously in the first quarter

of the 19th century in the North-East India. Before the advent of the British Administration in Assam, the indigenous system of education, however, continued to exist in some *Satras* and in a number of scattered *Pathshalas* and *tols*. Jenkins—the Commissioner of the Upper Assam, for the first time, in the thirties of the 19th century wrote to the Government of India to introduce English education in Assam,<sup>7</sup> and English schools were started in Gauhati (1835) and Sibsagar (1841).<sup>8</sup> Among the unofficial enterprises, the contribution made by Christian Missionaries to the great vernacular language in Assam, and in the tribal areas in particular, inspired by the zeal of spreading the Gospel, was unparalleled. By 1844 the American Baptist missionaries, under Rev. O. T. Culter started as many as fourteen schools in the district of Sibsagar.<sup>9</sup> The Welsh Missionaries who had commenced their activities in the Khasi Jaintia Hills also started about half a dozen schools to their credit. Similar institutions were started in Garo hills and Kachhari Mohalas in Darang and in 1840, Branson started teaching Bible to the Nagas at Samsang along with improved methods of manufacturing tea and salt.<sup>10</sup>

The subject matter of this paper is to assess the role of modern education in bringing about social change and political awareness among the tribals of the North-East India during the course of the last 125 years. A number of village surveys conducted by the Census of India (1961) and Agro-Economic Research Centre for North-East India—Jorhat (Assam) have shown the correlation between:

- (a) Christianity and high percentage of literacy,
- (b) and literacy and social change.

The following table will show the percentage of literacy and religious beliefs in the hill districts of Assam.

TABLE I. Literacy and Religion (1961)

District	Percentage of Literacy	Religions
1. Garo Hills	20	Garo (Sonsarek) 57.5% Christian 37.9% Hindu 4% Others 8%
2. The United Mikir and North Cachar Hills	17.4	Hindu 77.19% Mikir 14.75% Christian 7.79% Not stated 0.27%
3. The United Khasi and Jaintia Hills	31.5	Mostly Christians traditional Khasi Religion and some Hindus
4. Mizo Hills	44	Mostly Christians
5. Total Assam	27.4	Composite Population Majority Hindus

It is clear from the table that the percentage of literacy for total Assam is 27.4% but in the districts of Mizo Hills and United Khasi & Jaintia Hills the percentage of literacy is higher than the total percentage of the State and the main religion of the people in these districts is Christianity. Whereas this percentage is lower than the total percentage of the State in the districts of Garo Hills and Mikir Hills and in these districts a small number of people are converted to Christianity.

To show the relationship between Education and Social Change, let us try to analyse it on the basis of the 'fields situations'. Lawngtal<sup>11</sup> is a tribal Christian village in the Mizo Hills district. The centre of the activity of the village is church. This church was established between 1920-25 and Christianity came to this village in the last part of the 19th century. Out of the 427 persons belonging to 56 households, 178 are literate and 249 illiterate. The percentage of literacy is 41.7% and the value of education is felt not only by the literates but even by the illiterates. Normally the villagers are smart and hardworking people. They show their readiness to take up new occupations. The flexible character of society is to a large extent an outcome of literacy. The situation is quite different in Phangjangre (Mikir village) and Laisong (Naga village in Mikir Hills). Not a single villager can read and write in these two villages. In the first village we find a number of gods and Sun and Moon are also worshipped. In the Mikir village one lower primary school has been started but in this particular Naga village people neither feel the need nor realize the value of education. Both villages are backward and the socio-economic condition is almost static. The comparison of two other villages, Waromung<sup>12</sup> (Ao village in Nagaland) and Baushidua<sup>13</sup> (in Garo Hills) is interesting. The Naga village is having the benefit of a kindergarten since 1882, established by the Christian missionaries. Out of 1608 persons in the village 810 are literates, that is, more than 50% of the total population. Whereas in the Garo village the percentage of literacy is only 18.3%. In the Naga village a worked change in occupational structure and the attitude of the people was found, the Garo village with a low degree of literacy was backward, less modernized and the tempo of change was much slow.

Srinivas's concept of 'Westernization' and 'Sanskritization' may easily be applied to study the nature and extent of change in the tribes of the North-East India. Most of the Nagas, Khasis and Mizos profess Christianity are more literate and educated and they have been Westernized in their dress and education. Whereas Mikirs, Kacharis, Bodos and Miris have adopted Hindu rituals and customs and have been 'Sanskritized'. In these tribes the percentage of literacy is comparatively low than the previous tribes and their way of life, economy and occupational structures are more traditional.<sup>14</sup>



## II

In the first part of this paper, we have tried on the basis of the existing field data to show the relationship between Christianity, modern education and social change. At the outset, it must be clarified that social change is a complex phenomenon and it may be caused and shaped by diverse factors. Even among the tribes of the North-East India, apart from education, improvement in the modes of transport and communication, land reform, modern political movements, Christianity and democratic experiments, etc., may be regarded as the equally important agent as well as index of change. In the first part, our purpose was to view social change in the light of modern education and the percentage of literacy and to formulate tentative generalizations to be tested by further fieldwork. On the basis of the available field data and reports our hypotheses are:

- (i) High percentage of literacy, motivation for change and a gradual break from the past traditions and customs are interrelated with each other.
- (ii) High percentage of literacy and growing education will bring about change in
  - (a) the pattern of family and marriage
  - (b) the economy and occupational structure.
- (iii) and finally, education will influence political participation and awareness.

## RESEARCH DESIGN

(a) To verify the above hypotheses, the present paper is based on the study of all 110 Tribal Students of Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh and the Primary data were collected through the interview schedule.

(b) As mentioned earlier, to formulate our hypotheses, and to collect the secondary data, we have taken the help of different books and village studies related to the North-Eastern Tribes.

(c) To substantiate our hypotheses in connection with the social change in general and political awareness and participation in particular, at some places, we have taken help from the recent newspaper reports, because, they throw light on the contemporary—Social and Political History which is not available anywhere else. Though our main report is based on the study of the students of the Assam Medical College but keeping in view the large area of the North-Eastern tribes, particularly to assess the nature of political awareness, within this report, we have incorporated some of the findings of another fieldwork conducted recently among the Khasis and Mikirs. Our respondents, therefore, belong to two categories.

(d) Tribal students of the Assam Medical College were studied to assess how far modern education is bringing about change among the educated tribals.

(e) And to understand the extent of the influence of conversion and literacy

on the tribes we have studied a Khasi village (high literacy and Christian population) and another Mikir village (low literacy and Hindus). In other words we have tried to study the nature and extent of change in two different situations, with special reference to the influence of 'Westernization' and 'Sanskritization'.

#### SOCIAL BACKGROUND OF THE RESPONDENTS

Out of the total 110 tribal students in the Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh, 76 students hail from the hill districts and 34 from the plains.

Table 2. Social Background

	Hill tribes		Plain tribes	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1. Rural		Nil	20	18.2
2. Urban	76	69	14	12.7
3. Male	45	41	31	28.1
4. female	31	28.1	3	2.7

It is clear from Table 2, that all respondents belonging to the hill tribes come from the Urban areas and out of 76 students belonging to this category 31 are girls. Out of 34 students from among the plain tribes, 20 are from the rural areas and 14 from the urban areas and only 3 of them are girls. All hill tribal students are Christians whereas all students from among the plain tribes are Hindus. It may be concluded that Christianity has played an important role in motivating the tribals for higher and professional education and particularly to the girls. Their way of life has been 'urbanized' and 'westernized'. On the other hand, among the plain tribes—where we find the influence of Hinduism (Sanskritization) the percentage of students coming from the urban area was found to be small and out of the total respondents while the percentage of girl students hailing from the hills is 28.1% the percentage of girls belonging to plains is only 2.7 %. All the respondents are between the age group of 18-26 years.

#### FINDINGS

*Hypothesis*—1. 'High percentage of literacy, motivation for change and the 'break' from the 'traditions' are interrelated with each other'. To test this hypothesis, respondents were asked:

(a) Are you satisfied with the present tribal way of life?

## (b) Whether you like tribal form of worship and customs or not?

The answers of the hill students were quite different from the answers of the plain students. All hill students were found to be equally dissatisfied with the tribal way of life and they wanted change. Male students have completely left to wear tribal dress but the girl students are still wearing their traditional dress. It may be regarded as the process of 'alienation' from the tribal tradition due to the impact of Christianity, 'Westernization' and modern education. They were asked about the activities of the Christian missionaries and cent percent of the hill students thought that their activities were quite good. Since they have embraced Christianity, the question of the liking of the tribal form of worship does not arise in their case.

In the case of the plain tribal students, it was found that all of them were satisfied with the tribal way of life which has been 'sanskritized' due to the impact of Hinduism. They are interested in material changes preserving their traditions and customs. Out of the 34 plain students 9 students (8.2%) think that the activities of the Christian missionaries are undesirable and 25 (22.7%) feel their movements are doubtful. As regards the verification of this hypothesis, we may say that education is not the only variable to explain the nature of 'alienation' from tribal custom. Students of both groups (Hill tribes and plain tribes) are equally educated but their attitudes towards tribal way of life are quite different from each other. The main reason behind this difference is the impact of two different religions, viz. Christianity and Hinduism which have influenced their 'world outlook'.

*Hypothesis 2.* High percentage of literacy and growing education will bring about change in

- (a) the pattern of family and marriage
- (b) the economy and occupational structure.

The following table throws light on the nature of family of the respondents:

TABLE 3 Different tribes and the nature of their Family

Sl.No.	Tribes			Nature of Family			
	Name of Tribes	Number	Percentage	Joint		Nuclear	
				No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1.	Khasi	41	37.3	6	5.4	35	31.7
2.	Mizo	13	11.8	2	1.8	11	10
3.	Jaintia	4	3.6	—	—	4	3.6
4.	Naga	10	9.1	2	1.8	3	2.7
5.	NEFA tribes	5	4.5	2	1.8	3	2.7
6.	Mikir	2	1.9	1	.9	—	—
7.	Garos	1	.9	1	.9	—	—

8.	Khachari	11	7.2	8	5.4	3	2.7
9.	Deori	6	5.4	6	5.4	—	—
10.	Khamati	3	2.7	2	1.8	1	.9
11.	Miri	6	5.4	6	5.4	—	—
12.	Sonowal	3	2.7	2	1.8	1	.9
13.	Thengal	1	.9	1	.9	—	—

The above-mentioned tribes in Table 3, may be classified into two categories—hill tribes (from No. 1 to No. 7) and the plain tribes (from No. 8 to No. 13). From among all the districts of Assam, percentage of literacy is the highest in the Mizo hills and out of 13 Mizo students, in the case of eleven respondents the nature of family is joint. In the same way the percentage of literacy is comparatively higher in Nagaland and the united Khasi and Jaintia hills and out of 10 Naga students 8 students belong to Nuclear families and out of 45 Khasi and Jaintia students, 39 respondents live in unclear families. The percentage of literacy is low among the Mikirs, Miris and Kachharis and in their case more respondents were found to be living in the joint families. It may, therefore, be concluded that there is a correlation between high percentage of literacy and the nuclear families. To know, how far modern professional education has brought about change in the attitudes of the respondents towards the structure of family, they were asked whether "you would like to live in the joint or the nuclear family?", and almost all of them expressed their preference for the nuclear families.

In reply to the question "on what consideration would you like to select your life partner?", out of 79 male students 25 were prepared to select on the basis of education, 20 on the basis of the status of the family and 10 expressed their opinion that character was the primary consideration. Out of 31 girl students, 8 girls thought that good physique should be the main merit, 7 stressed on character, 12 on good education and job and 7 on the status of the family. It would be sufficiently clear from these figures that among the group of educated tribals education and occupation are replacing the old tribal consideration of bride price or the status of a particular family.

#### ECONOMY AND OCCUPATION

To understand the nature and extent of occupational mobility among these tribes, the respondents were asked about the traditional occupation of their families, the present occupation of the father, and, the occupation of the respondents. As regards the occupation of the respondents, all of them are at present the students of Assam Medical College. Naturally they will join medical professions either as free professional (private practice) or as a salaried professional (service). The following table will throw light on the traditional and present occupation of the families of the respondents.



TABLE 4. Occupation.

Traditional Occupation	Hill students		Plain students	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
Cultivation	49	44.5	30	27.3
Domestication of Animals		Nil	4	3.7
Hunting	27	24.5	Nil	
Government Service		Nil	Nil	
<i>Present Occupation</i>				
Cultivation	25	22.7	5	4.5
Business	8	7.3	12	11
Government Service	42	38.18	17	15.45

It is obvious from the above table that

1. Cultivation, domestication of animals and hunting these were the only traditional occupations for the families of these respondents. Out of the 76 hill students, in the case of 49 the traditional occupation was cultivation and the families of 27 of them were engaged in hunting. As regards the traditional family occupation of the plain students 30 families were engaged in cultivation and four in the domestication of animals. Government services was not the part of the traditional occupation for these tribes.

2. On the basis of the data of the Table 4, a marked change from the traditional occupation to modern occupations is visible. Out of the total 110 respondents' families the main occupation of the 59 families is Government service, 20 families are engaged in business and 30 of them belong to the families of cultivators.

3. In this way—the change in occupational structure is bringing about change in tribal economy and the pattern of occupation change is from tribal occupations to the modern occupations in the generation of father and from business and government service to professions in the generation of the respondents.

#### A LOOK AT NEFA

The main agents of change among the hill and the plain tribes have been Christianity and Hinduism—followed by modern education, improved means of transport and communication etc. The positions of NEFA tribes in somewhat different. In some areas of NEFA there is influence of Buddhism and Hinduism but most of the tribes have been observing their tribal customs and forms of worship. No external agencies are allowed to operate in NEFA and in this way, whatever change is taking place there, that is the result of socio-economic planning and the efforts of the government. The following news

report will give some idea about the nature of change which is taking place in this remote frontier area of India.<sup>15</sup> Practically unobserved by the rest of India the vast hill and forest regions of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA) are getting out of their centuries old isolation and trying to catch up with the pace of progress in post-independent India.

The sparsely populated 32,000 sq. miles territory, much bigger in area than the proposed autonomous Hill State of Assam and five times larger than Nagaland, stretches from the McMahon Line to the plains of Assam. 1st four lakh tribal population—simple dignified and friendly grouped—into 18 major tribes and several sub-tribes of clans, appear to have taken their stride the incursions of modern life into their traditional society.

A visible change is taking place in the education and economy of NEFA. Educationally, there were just three primary schools with about 30 students in the area before independence. Now there are over 400 primary schools, 36 middle schools, 15 high and higher secondary schools and a college at Pasighat, the total student population in 1968 being 22,485.

The pressmen were told that till 1968, 35 NEFA students had graduated. At Along, headquarters of Siang district, they were introduced to the first gazetted Officer to be recruited from among them a B.A. student from Pasighat College, clad in tight trousers and coat and tie, led the welcome dance at a feast arranged by Along tribesmen of Darkang village in honour of the press party.

Administration officials said that the demand for schools was widespread and the newly educated boys and girls, who preferred to serve in the Agency itself, were not experiencing any problems of social adjustment.

Not long ago many of the tribes reckoned their wealth in terms of "Mithuns"—a docile animal which looks like a cross between a cow and a buffalo and lives in a semi-wild state. Now the rupee currency has been fitted into the "Mithun and tribal economy" everywhere. "Jai Hind" is a form of greeting widely used.

The latest developments in agriculture, the high yielding seeds, have found their way into the hills. The Taichung Native—I paddy was introduced in 1967 in three villages of Siang-Pakam, Kombo and Tadin. The tribal farmers were impressed by it and in 1968, one village alone cultivated 80 acres with the new seeds. The Taichung Native—I variety is now being replaced by the more disease-resistant IR-8, the "miracle rice".

The development work, one noticed, was guided by a 'philosophy' about which most officials talked. They were aiming at a "synthesis of the old and the new" retaining good old basic values of the tribal life.

*Hypothesis 3.*—"Education and high percentage of literacy will influence political participation and awareness." How far the tribal communities of this region are politically enlightened, it may be understood by this fact that a group of Nagas started struggles for the independent Nagaland and the same

story was repeated by the Mizo National Front in the Mizo district and all Hill People's Leaders Conference has been agitating for a separate state consisting of the hill districts of Assam. Now the Nagaland is the sixteenth State of the Republic of India and Parliament has recently approved the bill for the formation of a separate hill state known as Meghalaya to be carved out of Assam (22nd amendment bill of the Constitution). The sociology of modernization refers to a particular situation known as the '*traditionalisation of modernization*'. This situation is quite distinct in the case of these tribes. On the one hand, modern political ideas and modern political institutions like political parties, and state have taken the deep root among these tribes. On the other hand, along with growing political awareness and the emergence of the modern political institutions, a strong sentiment for the tribal loyalty and unity has also been gaining ground. At times, the whole situation appears to be quite paradoxical, viz., adoption of modern education and struggle for the preservation of tribal customs, attempt for the identification with the universalistic values by severing connection with the tribal form of worship and separatist movement, etc. The following news reports may be cited as 'case-studies' to substantiate our statement;

(a) While the election forecast can hopelessly wrong in Nagaland—where the complex political situation is confounded by tribal and clan considerations. . . . The fielding of the Democratic candidates at the last election was also similar to that of the present UF that is setting candidates in the Angami and Ao tribal areas where the Naga underground movement is known to have substantial influence."<sup>16</sup>

(b) A good understanding among the Naga leaders of different tribes made it possible to make a unanimous choice of the legislature party in the person of Shri Nokishe Sema. The first Chief Minister of Nagaland was an Ao, the second one was an Angami and now it is the turn of the Semas to guide the destiny of the State."<sup>17</sup>

(c) We are happy that the State government has generously conceded to the demand for Bodo language, which will provide better facilities for proper education of the Bodo-speaking students of the State. But the use of Roman script is a different matter as it involves more than one problem. . . . The Christians section of Bodos have been active for it for the last few years but there was opposition from the Brahma and Hindu Boros.

The above reported cases indicate a phase of 'transition' between 'particularism' and 'universalism'. As regards the relationship between high rate of literacy and high degree of political participation it may be evident from the percentage of polling in the recent mid-term elections held in February 1969. In UP where the percentage of literacy is lower than the Nagaland the average percentage of polling in the State was about 53% whereas "the first day of polling in the three day general elections in Nagaland was brisk, peaceful and enthusiastic despite the Phizo faction's call for a boycott. More than 90%

of the electorate involved in today's voting exercised their franchise according to the chief electoral officer. At one booth polling was reported to be almost cent percent."

Our primary data regarding the political participation and awareness is based on the comparative study of Khasi and Mikirs. Khasi village representages of literacy (80%) whereas among the Mikir village the rate of literacy is quite low (35%). The following table will explain the major considerations of the respondents in casting their votes.

TABLE 5. Considerations in Casting Vote

	Khasi		Mikir	
	No.	Percentage	No.	Percentage
1. Clan	6	6		
2. Tribe	22	22	20	20
3. Friendship	2	2	—	—
4. Ideology	62	62	—	—
5. Personal merit of the candidate	8	8	2	2
6. Any other (or the basis of ruling government	—	—	37	37

It is clear from the Table No. 5, that among the Khasis 62% would like to vote on the basis of ideology, 22% on the basis of tribal affiliation, 8% will keen into consideration the cersonal merit. 6% clan affiliations and 2% friendship and personal relationship. On the other hand, 37% Mikirs would always like to support the ruling party, 20% will vote on the basis of tribal affiliation and 2% on the basis of the personal merit of the candidates. On th basis of the table 5, it may be inferred that:

(a) the low degree of literacy may restrict the expansion of political and ideological considerations and awareness;

(b) high degree of literacy may encourage 'universalistic' and 'rational attitude regarding the voting behaviour of the people.

To assess the level of political awareness these Khasi and Mikir respondents were asked to indicate their knowledge regarding the political parties and the political leaders. Names of Gandhi and Nehru were known to all the respondents in both groups, but Jayaprakash Narayan was known to 54% Khasi and 29% Mikirs, Dr. Zakir Husain (before his death) to 52% Khasis and 20% Mikirs; Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia to 42% Khasis and 16% Mikirs; Dange to 15% Khasis and 4% Mikirs; Rajagopalachari to 10% Khasis and 4% Mikirs; Atal Behari Vajpayee to 9% Khasis and 3% Mikirs; Indira



Gandhi to 92% Khasis and 91% Mikirs; and B. P. Chaliha to 96% Khasis and 74% Mikirs. It is clear from the above figures that Khasis with a higher percentage of literacy are politically more conscious.

Finally we may conclude that though education is not the only but it is an important variable for social change and political consciousness, and our study has proved their relationships.

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# The Christian Church Among the Angami Nagas

KHRIELENO TERHUJA

If one responsible dynamic factor were to be singled out for an overall change in the life of the Nagas, it would undoubtedly be the introduction of Christianity among them. As a case study of its impact on the Nagas, I have chosen the Angami Nagas which is one of the 14 tribes of Nagaland. The Assam population is about 40,000.

Assuming that one already knows about the socio-political background of the Nagas, I will refer to the Church's mission to the Angami Nagas.

## INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY AND GROWTH OF THE CHURCH

The first Christian missionary effort in Nagaland was made in the nineteenth century. It was carried out by the American Baptist Foreign Missionary Society. They then working in the Assam valley had a deep concern to reach the Naga hill tribes with the gospel. The earliest venture was made by Dr Miles Boonson in about 1840. It opened a school at Namsang (now in Tirab of NEFA) near Konyal Nagas' border with Assam. The Nagas then usually associated the white-man with the idea of punitive actions for the Naga raids. Therefore the mission faced uncertainties and danger. Besides, on the ground of health reasons, the work was closed down eventually.

During the following years the missionaries befriended a few Naga traders in the Naga-Assam borders. In 1851, an Ao Naga was baptized at Sibsagar by the Rev. S. W. Whiting. Another Ao Naga, Subongmeren accepted Christ through Dr Clark's contacts with him at Sibsagar. Subongmeren and Godhula, an Assamese Christian made necessary preparations with Dr Clark to go to the Ao country finally. The then British government did not approve of the preseney of any foreigner in Nagaland because they considered that their lives would be endangered constantly by the Naga head-hunters.

Their entry into the hills particularly then in Molung-Ymsen village was greatly resented by the Nagas and the lives of these pioneers were in danger. Many of those villagers were seeing a white-man and a man from the plains for the first time. They were "imprisoned" within the village for several months because of tribals' hostility. When Clark was touring the Naga country

he was speared at by the Nagas. The spear hit between the soles of his shoe but he calmly restored the weapon to the attackers. He carried on his work practically in the midsts of tribal feuds. The British then had not extended its administration to the Ao Nagas or to other Naga areas and Clark's plea for protection was rejected.

Gradually, fifteen Ao Naga families became Christians for fear of persecution, they fled to a new site now known as Molung. This occurred on March 2, 1876, and the date is now accepted as the founding day of the Naga Church. This action enraged the village tribal chief and he sought the help of his allied village of Chungtia. Meanwhile, the Christian also succeeded in convincing that village with their case and a church was established.

At the request of Dr. Clark (1875-1911), the C. D. Kings (1879-1886) were sent to Kohima soon after the British had occupied the Angami areas. He built a school and a church but had to return to America on account of ill health. Dr. S.W. Rivenburg (1886-1923) succeeded Kings and he became the true founder of the Angami church. The first five years of his service was without a single convert. The few converts of Kings' had left the church again by then. Rivenburg was a medical missionary and his skill became the point of contact with the Nagas. He personally attended the sick in their homes and convinced them of his mission. Rivenburg reduced Angami into writing (Roman-lettering) for the first time and portions of scriptures were translated from Greek into Angami. A school was reopened by the Mission and in 1910 seventy-five boys were enrolled. Dr Seville Iralu, my father, was then one of these boys. Typical of those early days, his father took him back to the village for lack of appreciation of education and for fear of conversion to Christianity. Rivenburg personally called him back and Iralu continued his schooling and later received medical education. He became a Christian while studying in Kohima.

The students were deeply influenced by the dedicated personal life of Rivenburg in whose life they saw a unique message. Depending on the abilities of his students, he personally choose their career and sent them for higher education. They later became responsible worker among their people.

The Angamis around Kohima area at this time were under strong military control. Christian work and education were permitted henceforth with the extension of political administration. From 1879-1954 six American missionary families served the Angami field. The neighbouring tribes of Angamis—Rengma, Zehang and Lothas were reached gradually from Kohima. Numerous lay Christians and native evangelists helped the growth of the church.

Rev. J.E. Tanquist (1912-1948) and Mr. G. W. Supplee (1921-1949) translated the Angami head testament. A Bible School was opened to train church workers. Supplee popularised church music through the Christian

students. The Kohima mission school was soon given to government and later on secular education programme was not viewed as an immediate need or project of the mission since government began to take up that responsibility for the people.

On account of disturbed political conditions in Nagaland, no Baptist foreign missionaries were allowed to work thereafter 1954. But the first educational Angamis were mostly Christians and the church received a good foundation already. All the church work are in the hands of Angami Nagas today.

In recent years, there is a "revivalist" movement within the Angami Baptist church led by some lay christians. They had formed multiple dissident groups and one of these is affiliated to the Ceylon Pentrostal Mission.

The Roman Catholics also had started their mission in the area in 1951 when some turns came to serve in the Naga Civil Hospital. They belong to Salesian order of St. John Boolo. They had eleven village churches in Nagaland with about one thousand members in 1965. No Nagas are being trained for the priesthood so far. Their mission is maintaining three schools in the area today.

#### TYPES OF CHRISTIAN ACTIVITY

Since the majority of Angami christians are Baptists, this section will refer mainly to their work. The church has become 'indigenous' in the sense that since 1954, the whole Christian work has been in the hands of nationals.

Every village (55 churches) has a pastor who is supported by the congregation. As some of the pastors are not ordained certain ordained men visit the congregations periodically in order to administer the sacraments. Evangelist work is largely undertaken by the lay Christians. There are only six paid travelling evangelists (4 men and 2 women). The local pastor and deacons with the laity contact non-Christians by house to house visitations. The young people's choirs also make inter-village visits.

All the village pastors are members of the Angami Baptist Church Council which was formed in 1932. This council is affiliated to the greater Nagaland Baptist Church Council on a tribal representation basis but is free to determine its own church policies according to local conditions.

There is an annual Baptist Church Association for all Angami churches. The 3500-4000 Christians who attend this Association are entertained by both christians and non-christians. These are separate conferences with similar arrangements for women and young people.

There is no christian medical work in the area. Five mission sponsored schools have an enrolment of about 1080 pupils at present.

The christian Women's Society has its own projects. Every village church has a weekly women's meeting. Each christian woman contributes nearly the



equivalent of a day's earnings. Many homes set aside a handful of rice at every meal to raise funds. There are community fields and gardens. The society conducts literacy campaigns, distributes scriptures, arranges women's welfare work and is supporting financially the current old testament Angami translation work.

Each village church has a granary to receive the tithing of crops. Where tithing in cash is difficult, the christians tithe their crops rather regularly. The Angami church is already self-supporting. The church is involved with the programmes of reaching other Nagas with church projects. The church was established in all Angami villages by 1960. The following chart indicates the growth of the Angami Baptist Church since its foundation till 1964.

TABLE I

Year	Churches	Baptized Members (Usually of adults only)	Quoted from
1895	1	1	Narola Rivenburg— <i>The Star of the Naga Hills</i> , p. 87. Ibid., p. 113.
1907	1	13	Ibid., p. 13
1910	1	80	Ibid.
1912	1	105	Ibid., p. 127.
1936	1	1534	Hooper & Culshaw— <i>Bible Translation in India</i> , p. 165.
1960	52	4653	Ibid.
1964	55	5000	Personal questionnal supplied by the office of the Council of Baptist Churches of North-East India.

There are several factors which favour the reception and the growth of Christianity among the Angamis. For instance, the extension of a regular administration in recent centuries have removed rigid isolation of villages. Communication was opened up and head-hunting was banned for the first time in their history. The very absence of peace prepared the Angamis to welcome the new era of peace. But it was only in Christ that they found the meaning of true peace. For example, the wife of an Angami warrior told the writer the testimony of her late husband. They met severe criticism for violating the sentiment of their whole village when this man decided to accept Christ. The warrior earlier killed a person with a singular view to avenge his uncle's death who was killed in the battle of Khonoma in 1879. The Angami social code demanded this action but when he heard the gospel of Christ he

was convinced of his sin. He renounced all his past 'glories' and accepted what he called 'the religion of God' which alone could give him peace of mind. The gospel was the main factor which had removed tribal hostilities.

The resistance from 'tribal religion' is largely overcome by the impact of Christian living and education. The first educated people were christians and they had better facilities for employment and advancement. This often creates a desire in the people to get education and christianity. These influence are felt more easily in a compact community like the Nagas.

The Angamis were first reached by a denomination (Baptist) which advantageously fitted into the democratic structure of the people. The Angami men regularly attend the Thehu (male club) where all village affairs are discussed and supervised. This gregarious nature was enhanced by Christian fellowship. The Christian is as much attached to the Thehu as the animist Angami and his influence cannot be avoided. The emphasis on the ministry of the laity and worship pattern of the Baptist church are not foreign to them as far as the social structure is concerned.

The belief in a Supreme God (Ukepenuopfu) and the total absence of idol worship make them more receptive to the gospel. The vacuum created by the fear of evil spirits and dissatisfaction with their own religious system are filled by the deeper ideals of christianity.

#### NEW TRENDS OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE

The increased contacts with modern civilization have brought about assimilation of both evil and good elements in modern life. It also creates new struggle and hopes. The forces of change are the contacts with other faiths, culture, education, better facilities of communications and technology, and government policies.

A most significant progress is in the educational sphere. It is the desire of all parents to send their children to schools. The sense of value has changed to such an extent that a man would rather give a good education to his children than spend the amount on traditional community feasts. All schools are co-educational and women are increasingly receiving education. There are 179 literates for every 1,000 persons in Napaland (vide *Census of India 1961*). The educational elite is easily absorbed into various careers with better incomes.

With more money people buy more imported goods. The availability of cheaper goods is both harmful and beneficial. Yarn is readily available in market hence cotton is no longer grown and there is no produce of primary goods. The abundance of yarn and the opening of a wider market for hand-woven tribal clothes have intensified cottage industry. The Angamis are gradually departing from conventional Naga pattern of house construction with thatch and are now using corrugated tins, timber and cement. There is

greater freedom in arrangement of rooms and lay out. The various means of communication has removed isolation; most areas are connected by good roads. Locally broadcast programmes in various Naga dialect bring 'all Nagas' into each other's homes.

Medical amenities and improved sanitation have reduced the high death rate among the Angamis. The average family still prefers to have a large family for social and economic reasons. Children are welcome because the status of the clan or Thino is thus strengthened and lands are possessed and tilled. They are self-sufficient in foodgrains. Inter-tribal or inter-village marriages are becoming common. The impact of modern contacts have led the animist Angami to doubt his ancient faith. The observance of rigid traditional customs and ceremonial taboos have become lay especially among the educated people. There is a tendency among the Angamis to identify christianity with education and teetotalism. It is regarded as 'fashionable' to get education and become a christian because majority of the educated are christians. The Baptist church advocates abstinence from drinking country rice-beer (*zu*) or any liquor on ethical grounds and this is almost equated with christianity. The impact of education, modernity is creating a spiritual vacuum in the society at all levels.

The government policy is to integrate the Nagas into the mainstream of Indian life and this step has been intensified in recent years. However, on account of the stricture of the Inner Line Regulation of 1873, the entry of foreigners and Indian civilians from outside is not normally permitted in Nagaland. The military personnel, with whom the Nagas are in constant contact is identified with the 'larger Indian culture'; hence this gives a partial presentation of it.

There is a unique type of isolation between the Nagas and the rest of the country on account of 'peculiar conditions' in Nagaland. Owing to continued military operations and the rebel activities of the Nagas since 1958 especially, great unrest has gripped the life of the Nagas. The Angami area is one of the main affected regions. The question of a political settlement of the area is the most important current subject of concern. The *Mhoshoh* (self honour) of certain section of the Nagas favours the demand of Naga independence but another group feels the impracticability of forming a sovereign state on such a strategic frontier. The allegiance of the people is divided. There is a tendency to hold the christian church responsible for the revolutionary movements because half of the Nagas are already christians and it is those who are also better educated.

A regular military force is stationed in Nagaland to suppress the Naga rebellion. During the last decade, a large number of villages were burnt and many churches were destroyed. Many lives were lost in the process. It cannot be denied that bitter memories still poison the situation. And for one reason or another, military operation and skirmishes continue.

Some villages are not rehabilitated and ceremonial taboos or beliefs of the animist Naga are disturbed because certain requirements cannot be met while they remain away from the ancient village site. Bloodshed between the Nagas themselves has revived and the relationship between certain clans has been seriously affected. But neither the Angamis nor the Nagas as a whole ever became refugees because their mind could not visualize a detachment of themselves from their land.

Negotiations for restoring peace between the Indian Government and the Nagas and among the Nagas themselves are being conducted by a Peace Observers Team. The Nagaland Baptist Church Council took the initiative for the peace move. There are some serious setbacks to the maintenance of peace because the ceasefire agreements between the two parties are continually being violated.

Amidst insecurity of life and political unrest, the Indian Government has spread out a vast network of community development, education as means of national integration and solidarity. Larger section of the government machinery is coming into the hands of the Nagas.

The tensions and insecurity arising out of these changes yield multiple effects. The closely-knit tribal society is disintegrating in certain villages. In many homes there are young people who neither have a sense of value for their traditional upbringing nor have they sufficient facilities to appreciate the non-material cultural values of 'foreign cultures', material acculturation is seen more readily in all villages.

Violence may be an expression of protest in itself against undue restrictions resulting from clan allegiance or government policies. It tries to assert the democratic urge of the people and the desire to have freedom for wider relationship with people outside. For example, besides the Inner Line Regulation relating to Nagaland, Kohima town itself was under night curfew from 1956-1964. There is an increasing attempt on the part of the people to remove the like barriers.

#### SOME OBSERVATIONS

(i) The geo-political situation of the Nagas is such that they are subjected to a state of perpetual restlessness during the entire period of their contact with the outside world. A society to develop materially and otherwise require; some poise but the Nagas have not been able to enjoy it at this moment there may be an outward tranquillity but this may be a misleading one. The Nagas require to find an answer to the question which is haunting them all these years, the question of crystallising their relation with their neighbours on terms of equality, dignity and mutual respect.

(ii) There is a widening gap between the Naga mass and the 'main' stream of Indian life because there is no prospect of responsible dialogue



and of exchange of public view on the spot.

(iii) The inconsistency or the paradox of generous government grants to develop the Nagas and the continued pressure of the military operations of the other hand, is evidently creating distrust and a spirit of defeatism in Naga society.

(iv) The attacks on the Christian Church and its adherents as presented to the public in relation to the Naga situation is more of a case of rationalisation than truth. It betrays an immature understanding of the whole context.

(v) The Church has oriented the Nagas to a wider fellowship of humanity and to the treasure of modernity. The Church must be rooted in its concerned cultural setting to provide intelligent interpretation of the Christian faith and a proper relationship with new trends in society.

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C

Policy, Politics and  
Administration





# Policy Towards and Administration of the Tribes of North-East India

R. N. HALDIPUR

## INTRODUCTION

The term tribes refers to a cultural and historical concept. It is used in terms of a folk-urban continuum along which different societies are classified. Given a certain order of material culture and a stage of technological growth, some groups of people are classified as tribes. The conceptual boundary between tribals and non-tribals is flimsy and floating.

The qualities which Redfield considered for the definition of a tribe—which he designates as “little community”—are distinctiveness, smallness, homogeneity and all-pervading self-sufficiency.<sup>1</sup> The geographical and cultural isolation, group identity and cultural self-image maintained by the system of symbols and values make the tribal communities distinctive. Limited population density makes the tribal communities small in size and limited in innovative potential. Because of homogeneity, social interaction in the tribal community is face-to-face, and because of restricted historical depth, the tribals develop a ‘world-view’ which is remarkably different from the wider view present, in peasant and other communities.

The culture of each tribal community has a distinctive pattern in which customs and institutions conform to implicit choices of basic values. The primitive isolated community is a complete and self-contained system.

## TRIBAL POLICY

The question which has engaged the minds of administrators, anthropologists and social scientists regarding the policy for the development of tribes of NEFA is whether to freeze their culture and ways of life or romanticize their primitiveness. As such, both these approaches are equally detrimental, if the NEFA region is to be integrated with the main fabric of our national life. Our Prime Minister, late Pandit Nehru, pin-pointed it, saying, “The problem of tribal areas is to make the people feel that they have perfect freedom, to live their own lives and to develop according to their wishes and genius. India, to them, should signify not only a protecting force but a liberating one.” It was perhaps his idea that people should come to terms with their past and develop

from it by natural evolution. The passage to modernity has to be one, that would not sweep them off their feet. If this is considered to be the right approach, various schemes for helping them to step into the 20th century have to be made acceptable and put into execution through their own indigenous institutions.

What is good in their society and culture needs to be strengthened. Encouragement to tribal dialect, promotion of their arts and crafts through material assistance, creation of zest through their dance, music and other recreational activities, augmentation of their spirit of cooperation, self-reliance and love for nature are some of the steps in this direction. Introduction of water supply schemes and promotion of health and hygiene by preventive as well as curative methods, assistance in food production, horticulture and animal husbandary are some of the basic measures which form the foundation of progress in these areas. These steps have to be combined with a progressive elimination of all that is bad, such as inter-tribal feuds, bloodshed, slavery and curse of opium.

#### INTEGRATION CULTURE

The crux of the problem, however, is the process and mechanics of transformation. Many of our plans and schemes are based on the tacit assumption that culture is composed of several aspects—social, economic, political and aesthetic and if certain maladies are noticed in any of these aspects they can be corrected by themselves. Similarly, if certain aspects need improvement, it can be done without considering others. For example, it is thought by many people that the tribals are economically backward and their minimum requirement is material or economic development like food, clothing, housing, schools etc. This approach gives prominence to only one aspect in the minds of planners while the other aspects into the background. The self-reliance and the dynamism born out of the long struggle with nature are bound to shrink if the aspect of social solidarity, the self-maintenance and self-regulatory moves caused by the 'ethos' of the people are not taken into consideration. Roads are constructed without thinking as to how they would be used. Vast improvement in communication is planned. But the consequences like exploitation, demoralisation and the loss of nerve have been overlooked. Each aspect in itself is important but it should be regulated by the grand design of self-fulfilment and integration.

Head-hunting which was formerly practised among the Naga tribes may be cited to illustrate the theme of integration of culture. It was not a separate entity. It was the very core of the Naga culture based upon the concept of fertility. It was the main spring of their lives and their activities and behaviour were inextricably woven round this practice. This adventurous sport gave vigour and meaning to their lives. The stone-walls and palisades,

village gates majestically decorated with human heads, feasts of merit, flamboyant head-dresses, elaborate textiles with patterns symbolic of head-hunting are intimately bound up with this basic activity. The aesthetic life, full of inspired dances, and songs and colourful dresses is a response to their adventurous spirit. With the disappearance of head-hunting many a good element which was associated with it disintegrated and the former inter-village raiding found expression in underground activities.

Therefore, what is essential is the need to take a 'holistic view', before dealing with any aspect of tribal life. Human culture is constituted of various aspects which are not isolated but form an organic whole. A change in one aspect reverberates a change in others. It is not the economic determinism alone or the psychological factors by themselves but a combination of both, along with other dimensions like the social structure, value orientation, dominant leadership, language and religion in—short, the general ethos of a particular tribe—would be the answer to the complex question of transition to modernity, without destroying their pride.

Explaining the integrative approach or holistic view of culture as an important device in fostering development, Kluckhohn's observations are pertinent. He says, "if a tribe's customary outlet for aggression in war was blocked, one may predict an increase in intra-tribal hostility (perhaps in the form of witchcraft) or in pathological states of melancholy resultant upon anger being turned inward against the self. Culture patterns must be respected because they are functional. If a pattern is destroyed, a socially desirable substitute must be provided or energies must be purposefully channelled in other directions."<sup>2</sup>

The same trend has been observed amongst the Nagas. A fundamental change has come in shifting the gear of life from war to peace. With the cessation of head-hunting, and gradual disappearance of the feasts of merit, the itch for adventure for some has taken the turn of joining in hostilities.<sup>3</sup> In the words of Elwin, "It does, in fact, say much, for the vitality of Naga culture that it has not disappeared altogether".<sup>4</sup>

#### PROCESS OF CHANGE

It is necessary for an administrator to realise the forces working in a tribal group and adapt them to meet the new challenges. Such an adaptation would mean that there are no lost generations and that whatever is of permanent value in the older way of life is poured into the total stream of human culture. With the process of acculturation, conflict is bound to arise between the tribal culture and the new dominant force working on it between the old and the young. An imitation and assimilation of the dominant culture is but natural. The culture which feels itself to be inferior tries to ape the peripheral trappings of the ruling culture. In this attempt, it soon realises that it has missed the bus,

due to the failure to fit properly into the cultural milieu or to get integrated. This results into a feeling of deprivation and frustration and consequent swing-back of the pendulum into native cultism and autism, followed by an obsessive admiration for all that is good or bad in one's own culture. Things belonging to the dominant culture which were considered good are now condemned. This inner conflict is projected into the field of human relations.

The administration has, therefore, got to be careful not to make people consciously feel that he is an imposition and is depriving them of what they considered to be right and which he himself enjoys. He should not interfere with the process of growth but guide and lessen the conflict so that the inevitable dialectics is paced off to help people to grow into maturity. It is for imaginative administrators to overcome the intensity of the conflict by isolating individual factors and preventing generalisations and consequent emotional upsurge.

In the process of growth, where the administrator has to effect a smooth change, the youth can be both an asset and a problem. Especially, the educated and semi-educated tribal young men, who have been trained and brought up like hot-house plants have not lived through the struggle and competition which many a young man in the rest of the country has to face. Instead of sailing out on the turbulent seas of the wider world of harsh realities, they return to the safe harbour of their native environment. But they return like strangers who unconsciously react to the shoddy appearance of their home and the village and are like square pegs in round holes. The consequent impatience with their kith and kin for backwardness and inability to move faster than they actually can and the failure to achieve spectacular results leads to frustration where they unconsciously reject their own people and feel their inability to change them. But this is attributed and transferred to the government. On the one hand, there is no realistic appraisal of people's ability to absorb and on the other there is no correct assessment of the government's potentiality to bring about far-reaching changes. The educated tribal youth had hardly any occasion to perceive, in the outside world, identical context of sweat and toil, poverty and ignorance, disease and hardship. When they go out, they see the golden spots—the munificence and the splendour. They ask why they should be deprived of these comforts. How many of them know of the teeming millions that die in the streets and sell their babies to see that the babies do not die of starvation and to still the pangs of their own hunger?

The situation arising out of the feeling of helplessness of the educated youth to effect a change, results in their rejection of the older generation and their expectations from an agency like the government to wave a magic wand. It leads to frustration when the expected quantum of governmental response is not forthcoming. Either there is a freezing of response resulting in a lack of drive and initiative or they become disgruntled imagining that the



government is ignoring them. Thus a seed of discontent is sown, in which the government or its local representative becomes the scapegoat. The challenge to the administrator lies in how he will handle the situation and get the best out of the youth, so that they are more useful both to the government and to their own people. These people with great practical wisdom and a sense of self-abandonment, would have been an asset to the government under different circumstances and in identical areas elsewhere, but with a disillusionment at home they lose the proper prospective.

The other important problem would be the search for a spiritual home by the educated young men. With the education which is valuable to them, their eyes are riveted on various great religions of the world. They are likely to develop a feeling of inferiority that there is nothing corresponding to the great thoughts of prophets, in their own religion. The wealth of material in the established religions, the vast external glory in the shape of temples, mosques, shrines and churches, the drapery of the rituals and all the paraphernalia create an awe and the need to belong. One is aware of the problem but there does not seem to be an answer as to what should be the attitude of the administration to tribal religion.

#### UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Much will depend on the rapport, the administrator is able to build up with the people of these areas. They should feel that the government programme is also their own and that the government is not a mere distant ordainer of good and evil. It is up to the administrator to work out psychological means to be adopted, without undesirable consequences so that they can develop according to their own genius and at the same time, merge with the wider life of the country. The comprehension of unity in diversity, is a long drawn process and comes only as a result of a genuine fellow-feeling and experience born of deeper and stable contacts. Even in the rural sections of settled areas the feeling of nationhood is yet to ripen. How can we expect the tribal people in the remote corners, to feel one with their country when they have remained in isolation for generations? The challenging question then, is to bring about an emotional integration with the rest of the country and at the same time preserve all that is beautiful and good. It is vital for us to protect their beautiful designs, from their wonderful collective life, hospitality, love of freedom and equally important to make them feel that they, their administrators and the rest of the people are all one. The excellence of their artistic tastes exhibited in the execution of little details in hand-woven cloth, head dresses and the weapons make them merge with their environment as if the men and nature are pieced inextricably together. While maintaining it, it is important that they are brought into the main stream of the life of the nation. For this, the attitude of the administrators and the workers in the area is important. Unless they are able

to appreciate the people, their art, their music, dance and customs as also the food and drink, they are not in a position to build up the rapport without which the administration cannot effectively function. This rapport has to be based on a human approach. Our communication with them has to be through the perceptual media rather than through concepts, through a collective appeal rather than individual deliberations, through the channel of indigenous leadership than through a pattern unknown to them and in a language which is meaningful rather than a jargon which is foreign. No cultural phenomenon is intelligible apart from its relation to the psycho-biological imperatives. In the words of Malinowsky, "Culture is an organically integrated whole and that any attempt to study its part in isolation or abstraction is bound to give a distorted view of culture."

#### HOLISTIC APPROACH

To have the holistic view of culture is not enough. Its translation into actual programme of development is the crucial matter. What is required first and foremost is to get an idea of the characteristic purpose in obedience to which every tribe and every people consolidate their experiences and determine their social organisation. The form that these acts take can be understood by comprehending the emotional and intellectual mainspring of that society. As Ruth Benedict said, "If we are interested in cultural processes, the only way in which we can know the significance of the selected detail of behaviour, is against the background of motives, emotions and values that are institutionalised in that culture".<sup>1</sup> It follows that before condemning slavery as practised among the Tagins, or aggressive temperament as witnessed among the Daflas, we have to look for purposes and drives which they serve and how they are related or combined with other aspects that make up the totality of culture.

This holistic view is more important in the context of tribal development than in that of peasant or urban communities. The administrator can ignore it only at his peril. The tribal communities generally are small in population-size and are confined to limited areas. They have face-to-face interaction, and live a simple integrated life. The kind of differentiation that one is aware of, in complex societies where religious life is separated from the cultural and professional undertakings, is not known to them. In a sophisticated society, one is in a position to demarcate various aspects and fields of life. It is not so in the case of tribal society, which is an undifferentiated whole. Any threat on any front is interpreted as a threat not only to the basic security of an individual but to that of the community in its struggle for survival and the reaction is immediate and violent.

The analysis of tribal rebellions which have taken place in the past and have been studied by both anthropologists and administrators, such as the

Santhal Rebellion of 1855 studied by W.J. Cishaw and W.G. Archer, the Rampa rebellion of 1879 studied by Prof. Haimendorf, Bastar rebellion of 1910, Oraon of 1918, Warli agitation in 1948, Birsa movement and the recent trouble in Nagaland, the Mizo hills and the Srikakulam agitation might throw light on what is stated earlier. Some of these studies have shown that the rebellions have taken place when a group of people find it or think that it is impossible to adjust themselves to the prevailing situation. They are confronted with conflicting values and a threat to their basic security—real or imaginary—which eventually leads them to defy the government.

The tribal unrest also occurs in situations where adjustment becomes difficult in the process of acculturation. At such a critical juncture, a new leader emerges and vocalises the dormant ideas, under threatening conditions like famine, excessive interference or exploitation. Since the tribal people live in a totality which is mixed up with their conception of the supernatural, the reaction takes a violent turn. They are by nature shy and prefer to stay in isolation. When they feel that they are exposed to a risk, their repressed energy manifests itself into a collective outburst.

#### TRIBAL ADMINISTRATION

The machinery for implementation of above ideas and for the translation of the philosophy into practice, is equally vital to the problem of administration. In a small homogeneous tribal community, which is devoid of compartmentalisation and in which sacred and secular are one and the same, an administrative set up with several ramifications seems to be ineffective.

1. A single-line administration with proper leadership can bring about a renaissance of tribal life and culture. In one district of NEFA, it was observed by Elwin that the morale of the staff was high; every one from the top downwards was on his toes; people were cheerful, enthusiastic and working hard. Perhaps the most important innovation made by the officer in charge was his plan of placing each of the surrounding villages in charge of an individual officer, whose duty it was to visit it regularly and inspire the people to carry out a carefully defined programme. As a result, tracks were constructed, villages cleaned up, waterpoints established, dancing grounds and *kebang* (houses) made, dormitories repaired and weaving revived. A remarkable spirit was infused into the people. The officers themselves found a new interest. It may be noted that under proper leadership, they found plenty of time to undertake new duties. The method adopted by them was chalking out a fivepoint programme which included items in which the local population showed competence. This was a spring-board for schemes, such as a drinking water-supply, which brought immediate satisfaction. Introduction of water supply schemes, which form the basis of health and hygiene,

improvement of village paths, main roads of communication linking headquarters with the plains and other administrative centres, provision of medical facilities and the prevention of disease, eradication of malaria, encouragement to tribal dialect and the promotion of their dance, crafts, supply of educational facilities so that they slowly take over the task of administering themselves and also be one with the fabric of a larger society—in short, these impact projects, if well-planned, starting off from where the tribal people are, would go a long way in stabilising these areas.

2. Much depends upon officers who are in charge of tribal development administration. There are those who thoroughly enjoy living in these areas and working amongst them while there are others who feel as if they are going mad. Introducing dissatisfied officials into the interior will not advance the cause of integration.

3. The workers should not be distracted from their main task by too heavy a burden of paper work, too many visitors or a multiplicity of schemes, above all by having to waste a great deal of time settling disputes between members of the staff who do not have their heart in the work. We should try to do a few things well rather than many things indifferently, by concentrating on fundamentals. This generates enthusiasm among the tribals increasing their cooperation. Too many officials with very little work to do does more harm than good.

4. Quick results have to be shown in all our endeavours. The tribal mind is such that they hate waiting; too many schemes and empty promises make them confused and frustrated. 'Too little too late' creates a crisis of trust. In these areas, one should never pass an order which one cannot carry out. Effective implementation and quick decision evoke admiration and a sense of satisfaction. Frustration arising out of a credibility gap and inaction lead to tribal unrest.

5. The process of acculturation cannot be stopped when two cultures, ways of life and modes of living come in contact with one another. Invariably one leaves it to impress on the other. In the case of tribal culture, history is not very deep. Unlike areas with deep-rooted traditionalism based upon centuries of culture, there is not much of inhibition and resistance to change. Too much interference with the natural process of change invites hostility or indifference. One, therefore, has to set into motion a selective process, combining, all that is good and holds the tribal life together, with modern amenities.

6. It helps in tribal areas if the officials attend to items like dress, language, etc. They have to become not only tribal-minded but also rural-minded. Usually our officials are urban-oriented and do not like to work with their hands. The little gestures go towards building up a rapport with people, which is essential, for good administration.

There is no trodden path for administration in tribal areas. New paths



have to be created and the venue, the velocity are as important as the individual agent of change. There should be a clear perception of the job, an understanding of the people and the staff who are an integral part of the programme. The workers should be trained in understanding the common objectives. A sense of participation, coordination and team spirit have to be created. One should also remember the words of Chesterson "that nothing ought to be too big for a brave man to attack but there are something too big for a man to patronise". It is found from past experience that tribals resort to force when it is impossible for them to adjust and reconcile conflicting values. Their great love for land and forest, their customary law which is a motive force, their faith in superanatural powers from the nucleus of cultural integrity. In addition, they should be protected from exploitation, indebtedness, encroachment on land and complicated legal procedures. A psychological integrity is thus equally important. With their awakening to new aspirations and expanding needs, there is a constant effort on their part at self-identification. In the words of Prof. Nirmal Kumar Bose, "The only safeguard required is to assure the tribal people of enough power to prevent them from being converted into helpless elements in a larger economic organisation which they cannot wholly comprehend. The only way to achieve it is through education and organisation, and the preparation to share with equality the burdens, as well as the glories, of a new Indian economy which we are all trying to build up".<sup>6</sup> A stagnant society discovers its dynamism only through unfolding itself in self-identification. In this process of re-discovery, the tribe has to be interwoven into the fabric of society and made to realise that the distinction between tribals and non-tribals is an artificial one and their growth lies in the perception that they are an integral part of a large country, with a rightful place and potentiality for growth, with far-reaching consequences for them and their posterity.

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# Some Observations on the Last General Elections and Electioneering in Nagaland

NATWAR THAKKAR

## PREFACE

The last general election in the Nagaland understandably evinced keen interest in our country. There were many interesting aspects to it. This paper is based on personal experiences of watching elections and electioneering in the two constituencies of the Ao area in particular, and those of the entire Ao region and the State in general. As the title of this paper suggests it contains mainly observations. No conclusions are drawn nor are any suggestions put forward. I have, of course, indulged at places in a little bit of aloud thinking and there is also the eagerness to share some of my experiences and knowledge. The constituencies on which I have mainly based my observations are known as Yimsemyong and Areka Kong. These names quite suitably do not belong to any village but to some spots only. Most of the constituencies in Nagaland are similarly named. I happened to watch the developments in the two constituencies as I belong to one of them and am staying in the close neighbourhood of the other. Each constituency in Nagaland consists of a population of about 6,000, the number of electorate in each case being about 3,500 to 4,500. The total number of seats in the State Assembly at present are 52, out of which 40 seats are to be filled up by direct election from 2 districts namely Kohima and Mokokchung and 12 seats to be filled up by indirect elections from the remaining one district of the State namely Tuensang.

## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Before we take a closer look at the last general election, it will be worth-while to take a look back at the past developments which converted Naga Hills into Nagaland, the youngest State, so far, of the Indian Union. It is well-known that immediately after Britishers left India, present day Nagaland consisted of two parts; present-day districts of Kohima and Mokokchung were one administrative unit known as the Naga Hills District and formed part of Assam, whereas present day Tuensang district then formed a part of NEFA

and was known as the Tuensang Frontier Division. No elections in those days were held in Tuensang but the then Naga Hills district was of course expected to participate in the elections as other Hill districts of Assam. It had a special privileged status as it was one of the autonomous hill districts of Assam according to the pattern laid down in our constitution. But when the first general elections were held all over India in 1952 with pride and enthusiasm, the Nagas refrained from exercising their franchise mainly on account of the strong pressure exerted by the rebellious political elements against participation. In 1957, the story was not much different as far as polling was concerned. But there was one significant new development. Three Nagas with some political background filed their nominations and were returned unopposed to the State Legislative Assembly. One of these three MLAs K. Sema was appointed as a Deputy Minister of Assam in the Council of Ministers led by Bishnuram Mehdi. But some important developments were taking place within Naga Hills which finally led to the secession of Naga Hills District from Assam on the one hand, and secession of the Tuensang Frontier Division from NEFA on the other. These two erstwhile administrative units were merged into one and a new administrative unit with the nomenclature of Naga Hills Tuensang Area (NHTA) came into being under the Ministry of External Affairs of the Government of India. The entire Unit was divided into three districts, namely, Kohima, Mokokchung and Juensang, and it was to be administered by the Governor of Assam. A Commissioner was appointed with his headquarters at Kohima. With the constitution of Naga Hills Tuensang Area and the severance of the link with Assam, the three Naga MLAs elected to the Assam State Legislative Assembly resigned from their seats. This new administrative pattern was short-lived as the political aspirations of the Naga people continued to remain unsatisfied. There were further developments and a demand with strong popular support behind it came forward for the conversion of NHTA into a full-fledged state within the Indian Union. This new demand was also ultimately granted by the Government of India and was later on approved by the Parliament. As a preliminary step an interim body consisting of representatives of all the Naga tribes came into being. From amongst the members of the interim body an Executive Council of five members to assist and advise the Governor was formed with Shilu Ao as Chief Executive Councillor. Late Dr. Imkongliba Ao, who was assassinated later, was elected as the Chairman (Speaker) of the Interim body. It was agreed by all concerned that a full-fledged State Government with all necessary paraphernalia will be brought into being after complete normalcy returns to the region. The old nomenclature Naga Hills Tuensang Area was dropped and the region was named Nagaland. The formal declaration about this new arrangement was contained in a promulgation by the President known as Nagaland (Transitional Provisional) Regulations, 1961 (No. 2 of 1961).

The interim body started functioning from the 18th February 1961 and it



was supposed to serve a term of three years. But within a short period of its functioning the demands started coming forward for quicker advent of full statehood. It was argued that normalcy could be brought about in view of limited role interim body had in the management of Nagaland. The Constitution was amended suitably by Parliament in the year 1962 and soon after the State of Nagaland was formally inaugurated by the President of our Republic at Kohima on the 1st December 1963. The interim body had functioned so far for all practical purposes as *de facto* Legislative Assembly of the State and its Executive Council as *de facto* Council of Ministers. With the inauguration of our State, the Governor of Nagaland formally designated Executive Councillors as Ministers.

#### NAGALAND'S FIRST GENERAL ELECTIONS (1964)

The first important step after the inauguration of the State of Nagaland was to hold elections on the lines provided in the Constitution (Thirteenth Amendment) Act of 1962. Among other things it was provided in this Act that "The total No. of Seats in the Legislative Assembly will be 46 of which (a) six seats shall be allocated to the Tuensang District and shall be filled up by persons chosen by members of the Regional Council from amongst themselves in such manner as the Governor after consulting the Council may by notification in the Official Gazette specify and (b) the remaining forty seats shall be filled up by persons chosen by *direct election* from Assembly constituencies in the rest of the State of Nagaland". Nagaland State, as mentioned elsewhere, consists of three districts namely Kohima, Kokochung and Tuensang. Special provision for Tuensang district in respect of elections and in other respects also has been made in view of its having come under regular administration much later than the other two districts. The inhabitants of the district themselves had desired various special provisions and the Naga leaders who negotiated Statehood for Nagaland had also agreed to it.

A little before the last general elections in February 1969, the quota of seats for Tuensang district was raised from six to twelve. The procedure of the election of these members remaining same as before.

Nagaland State has two seats in Parliament: one each in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha. On the inauguration of State of Nagaland in 1963 it was decided that no fresh elections for the seat in the Lok Sabha will be held alongwith the elections for State Assembly but instead the sitting member representing NHTA will continue to represent Nagaland "until a person is elected in accordance with the Law to fill the seat allotted to Nagaland". In the year 1967 when the General Elections were held for the Union Parliament the arrangement for the election of a member from Nagaland for the Lok Sabha were also made but the sitting member Shri S. C. Jamir was returned

unopposed from the State.

The atmosphere prevailing in the State at the time of the General Elections for the State Legislative Assembly in the year 1964 differed a good deal from the atmosphere which there prevailed during the last general elections in February 1969. As already mentioned, there were 40 directly elective seats in the Assembly in 1964 and six seats to be filled up by the representative from Tuensang district by indirect election. Out of the 40 elective seats only 26 seats were contested (in 1964) and 14 members were returned uncontested. In 1969 all the 40 seats were contested; though it ought to be mentioned that even during 1964 the nature of contest in contested constituencies was in no way less keener than during 1969. The polling in 1964 was also high as it was during the February 1969. The percentage of polling in 26 contested constituencies in 1964 was 76.57 and the number of candidates who contested from 26 seats was 73.14 remaining members, of course, stood in a separate category as they were returned unopposed.

Nothing in Nagaland can be thought of or realistically assessed without taking into consideration the existence and role of the secessionist underground political group. In 1964 there were two parties in the field, the Nagaland Nationalist Organisation (NNO) and the Democratic Party of Nagaland. The NNO was formed mainly by those leaders who had been instrumental for bringing about Statehood for Nagaland and the NDP was formed by those who differed from NNO leadership and harboured sympathy for the secessionist group. The third entity which did not contest the elections but who insisted on making its presence felt was, of course, the secessionist underground. They had issued circulars to all Naga villages that they did not recognise the existence of Nagaland State and they would have nothing to do with the elections. They also further instructed the villagers to boycott the elections. This was their formal position but it was suspected that some of their prominent workers at least had lent their weight in favour of some of NDP candidates. It was also likely that there might have been differences of opinion amongst themselves about the role they should play in election politics. Whatever may be the case the indications then available showed that the people all over the State were not quite sure about the real attitude of the underground section to the elections. Apprehensions were also harboured by many that some form of disturbance also may take place. Later events showed that these were not completely baseless as stray incidents of firing by the underground did take place at some places.

Since trouble in some form or the other was feared, the arrangements to provide protection to the personnel responsible for polling arrangements and also to the voters themselves became necessary. This aspect of election arrangement has been presented sometimes in a distorted form by some

interested groups and it has been said that the use of force by army was employed during the elections. From all available information it can be said with confidence that no such force on voters was exercised by the Government Security forces during 1964 or 1969 elections. The very fact that a fair number of opposition candidates also get elected proves this statement. The number of polling stations during 1964 elections were less and there were places in which voters from some villages had to travel (on foot mainly) a few miles to reach the polling station. In such cases it was demanded that the voters be provided with suitable armed escort. The atmosphere then was such that this type of arrangements could not be neglected. There were, however, indications of force having been employed by other groups to prevent voters from exercising their franchise. In fact some candidates during 1969 general elections have been heard complaining openly about the use of force by the sections antagonistic to lawful Government.

In spite of all serious difficulties and a certain amount of abnormalcy in the State the elections during 1964 were on the whole a success. It was an entirely new phenomenon. The significance and meaning of this new process was comparatively better understood at those places where the seats were contested. The outcome of these first general elections was that the Ruling group in the interim body NNO turned to power with comfortable majority. The gains of the Democratic Party were not insignificant either. They bagged 12 of the 26 contested seats of the Assembly. NNO party won 14 of the 26 contested seats and 14 of their candidates had already been returned unopposed, making a total gain for NNO of 28 seats out of 40 contested seats. The 6 numbers sent to the Assembly by the Tuensang Regional Council also joined the NNO. At the final analysis NNO had 34 seats in the Assembly and the Democratic Party had 12 seats.

#### BYE-ELECTIONS

General election in 1964 was a very important event as it brought into the life of Naga communities an entirely new element. For the first time, it came to be vaguely understood how Self-Government at State level gets formed. Right from the days of the interim body and its executive council the Executive Councillors' role in the Government had gradually become more and more important. With the expansion of administrative machinery young Naga graduates found scope to serve at Secretariat and district levels. The villagers were coming to realise that the affairs of Nagaland are now being looked after by the Nagas themselves mainly. The first general election and formation of New Legislative Assembly increased this awareness further. The newly elected MLAs, most of whom were young, acquired a new glamour and importance. They went about their job with typical Naga self-confidence, never lost any opportunity to make their presence felt or their voices heard. Most of the

erstwhile executive councillors after general elections were back in their seats with wider powers and maturer outlook to their job. There were, of course, some additions to the Council of Ministers to ensure representation of all Naga Tribes. All these changes were heartening to most and even the most cynical of the Nagas could not but have experienced some satisfaction over them. The development that was, however, not easier to grasp was the emergence of an opposition party. One wonders if the full significance of the role of an opposition has dawned upon the majority of the Naga people even after the recent elections. The opposition party itself deserves blame for this. It did not do much by way of educating its electorate about democratic functioning of a government. It simply condemned those who were holding power during the transitional period and vaguely talked a great deal about peace, political settlement "Naga Nationalism" and return of normalcy.

The Democratic party was a party with a difference. One of its earliest resolutions said that "the party is to be regarded as an ad-hoc party set up to unite the people of Nagaland in these troubled times, and it will be open to the party to dissolve itself if and when the task is considered accomplished". It thus gave a notice from the beginning that it was not its aim to function as a permanent organised force in the parliamentary politics of the State; though one could not understand at that initial stage of its life if the party really meant what it said in the above resolution. There was still one more official statement of the party which said that "the party will strive to set up a pattern of administration best suited to the tribes so as to pave the way for (a) permanent internal peace, (b) lasting good relationship with the Government of India". What was meant by "the pattern of administration best suited to the tribes" or by "lasting good relationship with the Government" was not defined. This was no doubt a little confusing. Every-one in such circumstance was free to give its own interpretation to the meaning and role of this new party and its aims published in a very general way.

Some space has been taken above for the description of Democratic party because it became responsible for creating the necessity of holding bye-elections in the State in the year 1966.

The novelty of democratically constituted State Government was proving attractive to many and there were a few important changes in the State. And yet the uneasy political atmosphere prevailed. There were also violence and disturbances. Many measures were debased—some of them drastic and some entirely novel—to restore permanent peace and normalcy. There was a section which enthusiastically held prior to the statehood that the creation of statehood and installation of popular government elected by adult franchise itself will put an end to all the ills in Nagaland were sadly disappointed. A new idea now was in the air—creation of a Peace-Mission consisting of some renowned personalities. This idea was put forward in a conference of Nagaland Baptist Church leaders. I will not enter into the details about the nature of peace-



mission. But a reference or two to this new development becomes inevitable due to its relevance to the subject of this paper. The creation of the Peace-Mission led to what is officially described as "suspension of operations" and popularly referred to as "ceasefire". This peace by agreement between the State Government, the secessionist underground and the Government of India made a series of negotiations possible between the representatives of the Government and the secessionist underground group (which are variously described in press and elsewhere by different names). When these negotiations were going on, the Democratic party decided that all its members resign their seats in the State Assembly and invited NNO also to follow its example. All the 12 MLAs belonging to the Democratic party gave up their seats *en-bloc* but the NNO members refused to follow their example. (The Democratic party ultimately merged itself at a later date in the NNC or the Naga Nationalist Council, the political wing of the secessionist underground group). This action of Democratic party created the necessity of holding bye-elections; but due to various developments these could not be held till 1966.

The bye-elections in 1966 were slightly different in the sense that there was only one political party in the field, i.e. the ruling NNO and there were a few independent candidates. It was for the first time that the villagers learnt of something known as independent candidates. It did create confusion as some believed that independent candidates were those who stood for Sovereign independence of Nagaland. But by the time of 1969 elections the meaning of independent candidates became more clear. All the newly elected independent candidates, however, joined the NNO and the State had one party Government till the recent elections.

During these bye-elections also there were some apprehensions about disturbances in spite of the fact that the so-called cease-fire was in vogue. A few such incidents, in fact, did take place at some of the polling stations.

### SECOND GENERAL ELECTIONS (1969)

At the beginning of this paper it has been stated that the Second General Elections in Nagaland had many new and interesting aspects. But to understand the significance of the second general elections properly a picture of past developments was necessary. An attempt, therefore, had to be made above to present a picture of the nature of past elections and some developments relevant to the advent of election process as such. One feature that strikes at once is the fact that during last general elections all the 40 elective seats were contested and the contest everywhere was very keen. In most of the constituencies there were more than 2 candidates in the field and in one there were as many as seven contestants in all: Total No. of candidates was 144 for 40 seats. The polling everywhere was heavy. The people belonging to 860 villages of the state exercised their franchise. The percentage of voting in the entire state was

as high as 78.39.

There were two political parties in the field, the ruling NNO and the newly formed United Front of Nagaland (UFN), which in fact was the new incarnation of the former Democratic party of Nagaland. And there were a large number of independents, 74 in all. It will, however, be fair to note here that the independent candidates were of the clear shades: (i) those openly sympathetic to NNO, (ii) those openly sympathetic to UFN, and (iii) the third major group of independents which consisted of the supporters of former Chief Minister of Nagaland, P. Shilu Ao. He too, of course, contested the election as an independent candidate. To this there might have been a fourth group of a handful of simple independents only. Later events revealed that there was not a single independent candidate who had contested as one because of some kind of ideological belief or the other.

The party position when the results were first declared was :

NNO	..	22
UFN	..	11
Independents	..	7

But later on as the 2 members from UFN defected to NNO and all the seven independents opted to join NNO the party position was reduced to NNO 31 and UFN 9.

There was one major change in the arrangements of polling stations during 1969. The facility was made available to voters of almost all the villages to caste their votes within their respective villages. This eliminated the need of escorting voters to polling stations by the Security Forces personnel. Apart from this it was almost an open secret that no hurdles as in the past will be met with by the voters from the feared source. This knowledge at once removed a major inhibition from the minds of voters and people felt free to exercise their franchise. There was, of course, no use of force either by army or police in favour of or against any candidate. Looking at various difficulties of communication, terrain and uncertain climate of the region it must be said that the arrangement for conduct of the elections were efficiently conducted. It was not an easy task at all.

In the sphere of propaganda and campaign media, all kinds of means that are usually employed in rest of the country were found being used; the meetings, leafletting, pasting of posters, songs, processions parading candidates, posters of symbols, loud speakers, etc. etc. These things were found more in use in urbanised centres like Kohima, Mokokchung, Dimapur etc. The posters, slogan shouting and meetings were a common feature everywhere both in rural as well as urban areas. But in rural areas there was obviously the scope for greater degree of personal contacts between the voter and the candidate or his agents. In quite a few cases the canvassers and the candidates were seen going from door to door.

At the time of formation of the interim body the people who came out for political career and to fight elections were fresh graduates, the workers who were associated at one time or the other with some public organisation and the government officers who had resigned from their posts with a view to enter politics. During this election, the new entrants to election contests were in quite a few cases the fresh graduates from colleges and universities. Many ambitious youth in Nagaland now aspire to be an MLA if not a minister. This is one reason why there was a large number of contestants in the last elections. There were also instances where moneyed interests were directly or indirectly active in the electioneering. There is now a sizeable group of affluent persons in Nagaland. It was also noticed that the involvement of high school as well as college students—boys and girls—in the electioneering at most places was much greater than in the past.

The fact of very high percentage of polling has been praised a great deal in the press and elsewhere. It is a noteworthy feature. But one wonders if it would be correct to read too much into this in view of special characteristics of Naga Village Communities. I, for one, have always believed that "Nagaland is a huge collection of autonomous or independent village states. There are no hard and fast formal bonds interlinking the villages. There have been friendship treaties between villages; the nature and aims of which are not much different from the treaties that exist in present-day world between sovereign nations. There is, of course, the system amongst Naga tribes of paying tribute by one village to its parent village or its protector village. But this system was confined to paying periodical tributes only. (It is however learnt that amongst the Konyaks comparatively greater authority is exercised by a powerful village over its offshoots or protectorates). As such the affairs of a village is normally the business of the villagers and village leaders alone. This practice to a great extent continues even today. The village discipline also makes it obligatory for every villager to participate in a community duty or ceremony irrespective of the fact if any individual villager likes it or not. It is this aspect of village life which made a high percentage of polling possible. Hardly anyone who was present at the village refrained from voting. The village elders and the village community had thought it fit to cast votes at the polling stations put-up at the village and everyone big or small, young or old, man or woman, whose name was found in the rolls went and cast vote. The canvassers of respective candidates naturally were very alert and they saw to it that none missed the opportunity to cast his or her vote.

Another interesting reason for enthusiastic polling all over the state is the great fondness of Naga brethren for any kind of competition, race or contest. How keenly the football matches get played everywhere. The village elders do not lay behind the youngsters in witnessing a match and striving utmost to see that the village team does not face a defeat. Concern for the village prestige and also the earnest craving to be always on the top is a great driving force.

Once a village or a Khel or a clan or a tribe enters a contest it wants to win; even if the process of winning at times may call for a certain amount of dilution of the normal rules and practices of the game.

It is essential for everyone concerned with this state and its affairs to recognise the importance of the "Village-States" of the Naga people. Even a very prominent person belonging to a particular tribe cannot make much headway in a village of his own tribe except through the good offices of traditional village authorities. Thus the "Village-Units" and traditional village authorities naturally played a very vital role during the last elections. Village elders were often put into dilemmas and tricky situation at some places. The Naga village elders may be illiterate but they are not ignorant. The villagers and their elders may not be politically matured but they are politically very alert or conscious. For want of better phrase I may mention this village spirit as "Villageism". The Village-ism was especially evident in bigger villages in Ao area and I am inclined to believe that the case in respect of many other Naga tribes also must not have been much different.

Many big villages were seriously concerned that person from their own village is sent to the Assembly. Most of the villages also tried to see that they let their candidate stand in the name of that party which according to them had better prospects of winning. Some other villages and their candidates played it safe by not joining any of the two parties till the results were known. Once a decision by a village was taken to put up a fellow-villager to contest, a common man of the village had no difficulty to make up his mind about taking sides. His task was made much easy. His concern for village prestige and his mental-framework immediately made him favour the candidate from his bid to win. But at times the elders were put in a difficult dilemma in some villages where more than one candidate from the same village expressed their desire to contest. In such cases various issues affecting the village-politics were debated and a final choice was made. But in spite of such official choice if any aspirant refused to abide by the village elders' wishes the village elders made it known to the entire village as where their sympathies lay. In an event of this nature it is not easy for a common villager to understand that he enjoyed full freedom as far as casting of his vote was concerned. But some of the villagers belonging to the clan of the "rebel" aspirant could not lightly brush aside their clan loyalties either; more so if the "rebel-aspirant" was an influential person. A majority of his clan in such cases generally favoured him. At time the Khel-loyalties rather than the clan-loyalties acquired importance. But such developments or splits did not fail to create certain amount of uneasiness or even anger on the part of majority in the village.

There were some exceptional cases where a village was faced with a different type of dilemma. In these cases a small enlightened section of village favoured a candidate belonging to a different village due to their better understanding of party loyalties or understanding of the overall political



situation in the state as a whole or due to their own conception of the ultimate interest of their village. A majority of villagers normally found it difficult to understand this kind of attitude and in some cases they felt very miserable indeed especially if a small fraction of such votes from their village became responsible for the victory of a "non-villager" and defeat for their fellow-villager.

There were naturally some villages in every constituency from where no candidates had stood for the contest. They had very few worries. There was inevitably a village decision about favouring a particular candidate and the majority votes naturally went to that candidate. Sometimes favour was shown in equal proportion by such villages to more than one promising candidate or to a candidate belonging to a friendly village.

During 1964 elections there were a few candidates who had been put up in the constituencies in which his own village was not included. These candidates had been returned unopposed from these constituencies in 1964 due to some practical considerations weighing with the local electorate. In 1969 too some candidates did contest in this fashion from the constituencies in which his own native village was not included. But no such candidate could come out successfully in Ao area at least. I am afraid I do not have any data of other tribes but it will not be surprising if the story in other areas is the same.

The big constituencies of towns in Nagaland like Dimapur, Kohima or Kokokchung which consist of mixed populations stand in a different category. But here too the general trend had been in favour of local candidates.

The clan (and in some cases Khel) loyalties have also played an important part. Each candidate and his supporters in their anxiety to win did get tempted to take advantage of the attitude of partiality of voters for one's clan, village, or khel. At certain stages after election the tribal considerations also came into play. Will the elections encourage clannism, tribalism or such limited interests? It is perhaps too early yet to say. Or is it possible that changes in other fields in the state will discourage such tendencies?

#### TUENSANG'S CONTRIBUTION

It has already been stated elsewhere that special provisions in the constitution exist in relation to Tuensang district of the state. The elections are not held here direct. Originally 6 members from Tuensang used to be elected by the members of the Tuensang Regional Council from amongst themselves for representing the district in the State Assembly. This provision has been amended lately and as a result Tuensang sent 12 instead of 6 members to the Assembly after the last general elections. The constitution also provides for appointment of one of the Tuensang members as member of the Nagaland Cabinet (as Minister) incharge of Tuensang affairs. At the conclusion of last

elections Tuensang played a more prominent role in cabinet making than in the past and it secured for itself two more ministerial positions in the Council of Ministers in addition to the Ministership for Tuensang Affairs. The Regional Council of Tuensang is fed with members by the Area or Tribal Councils by electing suitable persons from among themselves. The Area councils or Tribal councils in its turn consist of the elected representatives of different village council of a particular Tribe or Area. Some of the Naga leaders themselves have occasionally been heard expressing if Tuensang pattern of elections for the entire state will not after all be much less expensive in all respects and more practical and more helpful. Answer to this perhaps is not easy. It may call for careful study and consideration by the people of the state themselves and their genuine well-wishers.

#### THE NATURE AND ROLE OF OPPOSITION IN NAGALAND

In any party-system of government, the existence of an opposition is vital but its full significance in Nagaland is yet to be realised. The leaders in power too experience difficulties at time in adjusting their relationships with the opposition. The opposition itself on the other hand has not been able to understand the constructive and valuable contribution it is expected to make in the legislature as well as the government. Some of the common voters on their own came to believe that the purpose of the opposition is merely to fight a race only. In event of defeat of the opposing party in the contest the only honourable course for it would be to withdraw from active public life, keep quiet and obey the government. Some voters from these constituencies whose MLA had belonged to opposition in the past held a different view. They started suspecting that less attention by the government to the development of their constituency was being paid as they did not help the ruling party candidate to win. This section felt inclined during 1969 to be in favour of the ruling party only. Since effective power and authority have always commanded a good deal of respect in Nagaland some of the voters might have decided simply to favour those who were already in power rather than take the risk of siding a candidate or party whose future was by no means certain. It is perhaps not surprising that these types of different attitude to opposition were noticed. Parliamentary opposition of the modern type is an entirely new and strange phenomenon in a society like this.

It is, of course, not intended to suggest by the above that the opposition did not attract any attention at all. It did create a good deal of stir and many felt attracted to it for different reasons. In view of the fact that the party came into being on the eve of elections, their gains are not at all unimpressive. The party, of course, was a little over-confident about its prospects of coming to power.

The opposition party, namely, the United Front of Nagaland like its

precursor, the Democratic Party was a party with some very special characteristics and tactics. One of the journalists with good knowledge of Naga affairs, Shri Hamdi Bey describes it as follows :

I have always looked at this party and its precursor, the Democratic Party as the parliamentary wing of the Naga Underground. Some of its members have resented such a description but I persist in it because, professions apart, there is the reality of the group seeking to be bridge between the underground and the Government of India.

Interpretations may vary about the worth of such claims of bridge-building but this question is perhaps not relevant to our subject. The appearance of this party as being a wing of the group who is bent upon secession from India but at the same time its (UFN's) efforts to win seats of power by taking oath of allegiance to Indian constitution and by committing itself to safeguard the integrity of Indian Union naturally confused many. It did not enable people to understand its real nature or purpose. Erstwhile Democratic Party (which was formed by almost the same set of leadership which formed the present UFN) had emerged itself into the secessionist NNC. But in view of the NNC's formal policy of non-cooperation with holding of elections. Some of these prominent leaders responsible for the formation of UFN were reportedly expelled from the NNC on account of their having come forward to fight elections of the State legislature functioning within the framework of Indian Union. The resolution of a competitive body of the NNC which they were interested was widely circulated by an unnamed source in Nagaland during elections. It said:

1. The Naga National Council will strictly adhere to the declared national policy that any election conducted by the foreign element in Nagaland would never be recognised.

2. The following members of the central executive committee are expelled forthwith from the organisation for indulging in anti-national activities:

- (1) Mr. Vizol
- (2) Mr. Tajan, and
- (3) Mr. Taatheo Murry.

This account of the political party became inevitable because of the fears rightly expressed at times that the present opposition party in Nagaland may not contribute substantially in strengthening democracy or in educating people in the ways of democratic functioning of a government.

In the matter of the education of people in running of a democratic form of government, Nagaland suffers from another major handicap. It does not have local press reaching wider sections of population. With more than 12 to 15 major dialects and many minor ones genuine difficulties are involved. The

difficulties about communications are also there though there is great improvement in this field during past decade. The only media which can serve in a practical way at present is the Radio and the Publicity Units of the State and the Central Government. The Kohima Station of the AIR is rendering very useful service but due to low strength of its transmitter, its voice does not reach all corners of Nagaland. The plans are perhaps already under way to replace the present transmitter by a stronger one. The Publicity Units located in the state are also trying to adjust themselves suitably with a view to be as useful and effective as possible.

#### ELECTIONS, NORMALCY, DEMOCRACY

There was a feeling in the state and elsewhere amongst many that the results of elections might help to assess the prospects of Nagaland's return to complete normalcy and also the degree of faith of Naga people in the democratic form of government and the democratic way of life as the present-day enlightened opinion of the world understands it. There are people who are of the opinion that the results of elections did in reality show that the future of democracy as well as the prospects of restoration of normalcy are bright enough. The optimism is good but due caution too seems to be necessary. To do justice to our narration of important developments related to last elections the series of 3 to 4 violent incidents that took place at the conclusion of elections ought to be taken note of. An attempt each to blow up a bridge and a train was made, there was an explosion at the petrol-pump at Kohima town and a couple of Jeeps belonging to 2 candidates were burnt down. It is suspected that the secessionist underground registered in this faction its protest and thereby kept their formal position of boycott of elections in tact. Too much need not be read in this but it would not be correct either to overlook these incidents.

Elections have shown that the process of contest itself is very attractive to the people here. It got every individual involved in it in some way or the other. The novelty of the whole thing also had its great appeal. But it also left behind it unpleasant trails in the village and strained relations between clans or individuals. A casual visitor or persons in contact with urbanised centres or a select group alone may find it a little difficult to believe this. But a closer look and longer contacts with a wider area will help to experience this adverse aspect. Strength of numbers has acquired new importance. Success alone became very precious and indifference to fairness of means was noticed at times.

Democracy is often defined in an oversimplified manner as merely the rule by majority or government of people or absence of hereditary and one-man-rule. These too simple definitions create difficulties. It is not very



surprising if one gets an impression in Nagaland that the full meaning or understanding of democracy has yet to grow even amongst the educated class. We also come across frequent mention about the democratic traditions of the Naga. What is perhaps intended by this expression is to point out is the Naga traditional community life. There is need to cultivate respect for the personality of an individual. Existence of regimentation also can be noticed. As such the enlightened democratic traditions will have to be gradually but strongly built up. The task must be taken up in all seriousness and none can do it better than the leaders of Naga people themselves.

There is normalcy in Nagaland at present in the sense that there are not many violent incidents within the outskirts of the state. It is no doubt a healthy sign. There has also been a great deal of improvement in the overall situation during past one year and more. The sincerity and earnestness with which the Central government paved way for holding of election and introductions of numerous benefits and development programmes is the proof that no suppression of freedom is intended. Almost everything that can be provided to the people of this small but beautiful young state has already been provided. But Naga society is a society which has been governed for very time by different values of life which our acquaintance is not yet up to the mark. In addition to this the atmosphere in the state is much vitiated by the existence of the secessionist activities conducted by the extremists with the help of violence and based on unjust appreciation of the intentions of the rest of country. The thoughtful measures and approaches adopted by the country for the benefit and free growth of the people of Nagaland can be treated to be under experimental stage yet. It is necessary, therefore, for the people and leaders of Nagaland and the rest of country to keep an open mind and remain mentally prepared for minor adjustments and changes if necessary never losing sight of the need to maintain the integrity of our nation as a whole.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I express my gratitude to the Chief Electoral Officer, Nagaland for Figures of votes polled, percentage, etc. For the material for the paragraphs sub-titled "Historical background", I have been benefitted considerably by the Chief Electoral Officer, Nagaland's published report on first General Elections.

For figures of population of the villages my thanks go to the BDO, Tribal Development Block, Changtongiya.

The relevant comments on some aspects of elections by Shri Hamdi Bey have been quoted by me from an article by him, entitled, "Some friendly words of the UFN" which was published in a special supplement, dated 28 February 1969 of *The Assam Tribune*, Gauhati, on Nagaland elections. I record my thanks to the author of the article and to the Editor, *The Assam Tribune*.

## STATEMENTS

1. *No. of Villages :* YISEMYONG —7  
AREKAKONG —6

2. *Names of Villages with population :*

A. YIESEMYONG		B. AREKAKONG	
<i>Name</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Population</i>
(i) Sangratsu	2,092	(i) Yongyimesen	1,242
(ii) Yisemyong	N.A.	(ii) Changtongiya	1,338
(iii) Mongsenyimti	1,765	(iii) Changtongiya	557
(iv) Jakba	492	Station	
(v) Salulemay	261	(iv) Akhola	667
(vi) Yongyimti	354	(v) Unger	692
(vii) Chuchu Compound	421	(vi) Chuchuyimlang	2,016
Total Population	5,325	Total Population	6,482
Total Electorate	4,183	Total Electorate	4,804
Total Voters	3,369	Total Voters	4,024
Percentage	80.54	Percentage	83.76

3. *Names of Candidates and their Native villages, votes polled by them, etc.*A. *Yisemyong*

Candidates	Native village	Population of native village	Votes polled at native village	Votes polled at remaining villages
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A. *Yisemyong*

1.	Shri Sentichuba Ao (UFN)	Mongsengyimti	1765	949	393
2.	Shri Suzumar Ao* (Sitting Member, NNO)	Unger	692	nil	746
3.	Shri Khariba Ao	Sangratsu	2092	897	365

B. *Arekakong*

1.	Shri R. C. Chiten Jamir Ao (Sitting Member, NNO and Minister for Agriculture in the outgoing cabinet,	Akhoia	667	348	916
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\*Note, the native village of the 2nd candidate was not included in this constituency.

Candidates	Native village	Population of native village	Votes polled at native village	Votes polled at remaining villages
2 Minister for Finance in new Cabinet.) Shri Taukjem Wati Ao (Independent)	Chuchu- Yimlang	2016	697	314
3. Shri Imtimeren Ao (Independent)	-do-	2016	357	140
4 Shri Noklensama (Ao) (UFN)	Changton- tiye village.	1338	753	442

## 4. Village-wise and candidate-wise breakup of the votes cast

## A. AREKAKONG CONSTITUENCY

Name of the Candidate	Yongyimsem	Changtongiya Village	Changtongiya Town	Akhoa	Unger	Chuchu-Yimlang	Total
1. Shri R. C. Chiten Jamir (Ao) Native village Akhoa	276	94	199	348	188	159	1264
2. Shri Imtimeren Ao, Native Village Chuchu-Yimlang	45	7	3	14	71	357	497
3. Shri Noklensema Ao Native Village Changtongiya	208	753	112	71	29	2	1175
4. Shri Tsukjen wati Ao Native Village Chuchuyimlang	93	58	58	27	78	697	1011

Note: 1st candidate Shri R. C. Chiten Jamir was cabinet Minister in the outgoing cabinet. he is also a senior member of the Nagaland cabinet at present.

## B. YISEMYONG CONSTITUENCY

Name of the Candidate	Sungratsu	Mongsen-Yimti	jakpa	Saluloma yang	Hisem-yong	Yong-yimti	Chuchu Compound	Total
1. Shri Khariba (Sungratsu)	897	67	137	26	54	34	45	1262
2. Shri Suzumar (Unger)	194	147	61	50	21	120	153	746
3. Shri sentichuba (Mongesenyimti)	118	949	81	71	31	43	49	1342
Total	1209	1163	281	147	106	197	247	2360

Note: The Village of the candidate No. 2 (Mr. Suzumar) is not included amongst the villages falling under this constituency.



# Politics and Economic Development in the Hill Districts of Assam

A.P. SINHA

The tribal population of North-East India can be divided, on the basis of its political history, into three categories. (i) Those areas which were more or less completely untouched or scarcely touched by British administration, as a consequence of which their traditional culture or political organization remained undisturbed. Most of the present NEFA comes in this category. (ii) Those areas, like Naga Hills etc., which were a continuous source of administrative irritation to the British administration, and remained in more or less continuous political conflict with the British. (iii) Those areas, like the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, the Mikir Hills, the Mizo Hills, which, after some initial resistance movements, came under effective British administration.

The degree of the effectiveness of the British administration in these areas, and the intensity of the activities of the Christian missionaries were to a great extent responsible for bringing about considerable cultural and political changes among the various Hill peoples living in this part of North-East India. In spite of its appeal to the tribal people, Christianity has not been able to bring about any cultural or other homogeneity within themselves. The common symbols of identification for them, if any, emerge partly (i) from the common religion they practise, and (ii) the common feeling of social distance they have been observing *vis-a-vis* the people of the plains.

In my present paper I will go into the genesis and nature of some of the aspects of the tension and discontent prevailing among the major tribal groups inhabiting the Hill districts of Assam, specially the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, the Garo Hills, and the Mikir Hills (to be referred to as the Hill Districts).

The hill areas of Assam, though they constitute a continuous land mass, are not very conveniently connected by road with each other. The Garo Hills cannot be reached from the neighbouring Khasi Hills except through the plains. The Mikir Hills still does not have a regular road connection with the Khasi Hills, save a fair weather road. Until recently many of the interior parts of these Hill Districts are about a day's journey from the nearest road, though much progress has, since late, been made in

### the Garo, Khasi and Jaintia Hills.

The Hill Districts of Assam are mainly inhabited by tribal population, the non-tribal population being very small. The total population of these districts is 10,49,106 (1961) compared to 1,18,72,772 of the whole state, i.e., the tribal population is 9% of the total population of the state. Agriculture is the mainstay of the people in this area. The pattern of agricultural practices differs considerably in each of the different Hill areas. Jhum cultivation is practised practically all over the area, though it is most common in the hilly part of the Garo Hills, the Mikir Hills and the south-eastern part of the Jaintia Hills. Wet paddy cultivation is most prevalent in the Jaintia Hills, some parts of Khasi Hills, and those areas of the Garo Hills and the Mikir Hills which are adjoining to the neighbouring plains. Each of these Hill Districts produce a considerable amount of each crops, and have potentiality for much more. During the period 1949-64, the per capita agricultural output in the hills has increased from Rs. 95 per capita to Rs. 124, while it has shown a decline in the plains, if tea (a high value crop) is excluded from the crops grown in the plains. (Cf. Pataskar, 1966, 23). Even in agriculturally backward areas as the Mikir Hills, in one village the per capita income of an agricultural household has increased from Rs. 339 in 1960 to Rs. 453 in 1965, while it was Rs. 390 for Assam and Rs. 422 for the whole country in 1965. (Cf. Sarkia, 1968).

Ethnologically, the tribal people living in the Hill Districts are distinct from the people of the plains, but at the same time the people living in these Hills are very different from each other. Except the people of the Khasi and Jaintia Hills, who speak a common language of the Mon-Khmer group, the rest mutually unintelligible languages of the Tibeto-Burman group. Inter-tribal contacts depend largely through English, broken Assamese or Hindi. Each tribe has preserved its own individual pattern of social organization and culture in varying degrees, and each tribal group has its own experience of cultural contact and change. The Khasi, Jaintia and Garo people, though matrilineal, practise different forms of this social organization. The Mikir are a patrilineal group of people.

The traditional religion of the tribal population in the four Hill Districts can be summed up as 'animistic or spirit worship'. Hinduism had its influence in the Jaintia Hills, and those parts of the Garo and Mikir Hills which bordered the neighbouring plains areas. The Jaintia Hills has a long history of rule by the Hindu kings of the neighbouring district of Sylhet (now in East Pakistan)? Christianity came for the first time in the Hills almost a century and half ago. The first Christian Missionary came to the Khasi Hills in about 1813, about 1836 in the Garo Hills and 1842 to the Jaintia Hills. Christian preaching among the Mikir in the beginning was not direct, and not many Missions will be found there even today. About 90% of the Mizos are Christians. One of the greatest benefit the people of this area got from the spread of Christianity is in the field of education. The Christian

Missionaries were the first to give the Khasi (and also the Jaintia) and the Garo a written language and grammar. The tribes in North-East India today feel greatly indebted to the Missionaries from the West for their great work of uplifting them. There is, therefore, that "feeling of close relationship, if not loyalty, to the people who brought them the benefits of education and social and economic advancements". (Pugh, 1967, 241). This feeling of affinity with the Western people has sometimes made many Indians accuse the Indian Christians, and so also those of the Hill Districts, as having been denationalized or of having trans-national loyalties.

But the historical accounts of the tribal people of these Hill Districts are replete with instances when they have risen in revolt against the British rule or joined the Mutiny of 1857. Though the Hill areas did not play a very significant part during the Indian independence movement of 1942 or before, it is beyond doubt that no tendencies toward anti-national activities were noticed in these Hill areas. The people of the Hill Districts were never involved in the mainstream of national political movements.

#### PRE-INDEPENDENCE ADMINISTRATION

Ever since the annexation of the Assam Hills by the British, it has been considered a 'problem area' by them. The Hills, till recently, were not very happy under foreign rule. The Khasi states were the first to revolt. As early as 1829, within three years of occupation of the Assam Valley by the British, the Siem of Nongkhlaw revolted. The Zaliang Naga revolted as late as 1933. But the two revolts were different in spirit. The Khasi revolt was against interference with their traditional rights on land and forest, and against the imposition of taxes, while the Naga revolt of 1933 was with a secessionist ideology. These British legacies of administrative relationships were inherited by India on the attainment of Independence.

Before the First World War, regular administration of the British was established in all the Hills and substantial 'political control' was brought to bear upon the Naga tribal area. Under the Government of India Act, 1935, the Hill Districts fell into two categories: (i) the 'excluded areas', i.e. the Mizo district and the north Cachar Hills; and (ii) the 'partially excluded areas', i.e. the Khasi and Jaintia Hills (with the exclusion of Shillong), the Garo Hills, and the Mikir Hills. A kind of distinct barrier was maintained between these Hills and the plains during British rule. This isolation was responsible to a large extent for the economic backwardness of the Hill Districts. The administrative, and also geographical, seclusion of the Hill areas was one of the main historical elements in the creation of the present day Hills problem of India.

The outstanding factor was the virtual isolation of the Hill people amongst themselves, and also with the plains people. Cultural difference was

another major factor for the aloofness of the two communities. The Hindu system had no place for the tribal population, nor were there any socio-religious inspirations which would have encouraged the people of the plains to try for a greater understanding with their tribal neighbours, living in the hills.

The advent and spread of Christianity was another factor that widened the gulf between the tribal and non-tribal population of the Hill areas. The Christian converts were 'suspected to more anti-Indian than non-Indian'. The word tribal was being used synonymously with Christian, though it was not a correct expression. With the advance of the freedom movement, the Christian tribals were clubbed together with Western culture and people. This feeling of the plains people is substantiated by them by citing the absence of any participation of the tribal people in the freedom movement of the country. The feeling persists even today.

The political movement in plains did not have much impact on the hill areas, but each of the Hill District had its own social and political movements. A strong challenge to the ascendancy of Christianity was offered by a Khasi revivalistic movement, the Sene Khasi, in 1899. It was in 1923, when Khasi nationalism took a somewhat concrete shape with the formation of the Khasi National Durbar. On the eve of the visit of the Simon Commission, in 1928, the conference of the Siem and other chiefs, held under the aegis of the Khasi National Durbar, pressed for the recognition of the Khasi States. In 1933, in the wake of the move for the federation of the native States with India, the association of Khasi chiefs adopted the scheme of the 'Federal Khasi States', and later on they pressed for the recognition of the Federation. This was the first phase of a separatist movement motivated by self-preservation. The Federation was formed in early 1934, and among other things, it declared its loyalty to the British Crown. The movement provided the foundation of Khasi politics.

#### POST-INDEPENDENCE POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

The second phase of the movement started in 1945-46, on the eve of India's Independence. A Khasi States People's Union was formed and it resolved to form a Khasi States Federation, which started negotiating with the Imperial Government on the position of the Khasi States in future India. "The British Government (it is said) had a plan of getting a 'Crown Colony' formed comprising all the "Excluded Areas and Partially Excluded Areas, the Chittagong Hill tracts and the NEFA." (Thaoson, 1967, 176).

The Federation of the Khasi States, functioning under the Instrument of Accession and Annexed Agreement, enjoyed rights over land and water in the District. The Indian National Congress was always weak in the Khasi Hills, as in other Hill Districts. In the 1946 Provincial elections, U. D. Khongor, the President of the Khasi District Congress Committee was assured



a Congress ticket, but later he found that his personal rival, Rev. Nicholas-Roy, was given the Congress ticket, and even taken into the Provincial Cabinet. Khongor left the Congress in disgust and formed the Highlanders' Union Party, starting the spade work for the future Hill State movement, which was joined later by the Garo Hills and the Mizo Hills.

The Garo Hills, like its neighbours, was restless on the eve of Independence. In 1946, the Garo National Council demanded that its own Legal Council be vested with all powers including taxation, administration of justice, etc. The Mikir Hills district came into existence only in 1951, after the merger of the various culturally homogenous areas, consisting of the Mikir, of the Jaintia Hills and the Nowgong district. Political movements of these areas did not percolate to the Mikir predominant area, and hence the Mikir Hills has practically very little of political antecedents prior to the Independence.

The Interim Government of India, in 1947, realized the critical situation and the political aspirations of the people of the Hill areas in Assam, in the background of the assurances said to have been given by the outgoing British rulers. It immediately appointed a Sub-Committee of the Constituent Assembly, with the late Gopinath Bardoloi, then Chief Minister of Assam, as its Chairman. This Committee (the Bardoloi Committee) was entrusted to make an on-the-spot study of the hopes and aspirations of the hills peoples, and submit its recommendations. These recommendations later on formed the VIth Schedule of the Constitution and provided for Regional Autonomy for the tribal people living in the Hill Districts, in matters affecting their customs, laws of inheritance, administration of justice, land, forest, etc. The idea behind the scheme was to devolve certain legislative, administrative and judiciary powers to the people, and which would help to safeguard their traditional customs and ways of life, and ensure them 'maximum autonomy in the management of their characteristically traditional affairs'. It was felt that a harmonious balance could be maintained between the need to preserve the tribal laws and customs and the necessity to promote a balanced and progressive State administration based on the concept of unity of interest in broad aspects of policy." (Sarmah, 1967, 7). No responsibility and powers were given to the District Councils, to be established under the provisions of the VIth Schedule, for development planning and administration of their area. It was more a measure to provide protection than provide an opportunity for experimentation in development. It was in no way different that the earlier British policy of isolation and preservation rather than assimilation and change. The British legacy was maintained.

The provisions made under the VIth Schedule, and the autonomy given to the Hill Districts of Assam for self-administration did not keep the local people satisfied for long. The lure of office and power, though restricted and nominal, did not meet their aspirations. The genius of the tribal people of

these Hill Districts who were dynamic in outlook, amenable to accepting innovations and progress, ready for any experimentation and risk taking, did not find appropriate expression. As the VIth Schedule of the Constitution fell far short of the aspirations of hills people, the Nagas took the path of armed struggle, which they had suspended for a short period on the eve of Independence. The various political parties in the other Hill Districts (save the Mikir Hills, as it had yet to be formed, and pass through its infancy) continued their agitation, first for enlarged power for the District Council, and then for Statehood.

The problem of recognition of Assam first came to the forefront with the demand for separation of the Hill areas from Assam made by a section of the Hill leaders in 1953 before the States Reorganization Commission. The Commission, taking into consideration the various aspects of the demand, came to the conclusion that the "formation of a Hill State in this region is neither feasible nor in the interest of the tribal peoples themselves. The Hill District, therefore, should continue to form part of Assam and no major changes be made in their present constitutional pattern". This argument of the Commission did not satisfy the hill people, rather they felt more disgusted as no concrete recommendations were made by the Commission to meet some of the Khasi demands of the hill people.

All the more, the failure of the Indian Government to quell the Naga revolt, creation of linguistic States out of political pressure and more or less completely ignoring the recommendations of the States Reorganization Commission, in various ways helped to accelerate the fissiparous tendencies. Political parties entered the arena of this movement, in all seriousness, in 1957.

During the 1957 general elections, the Eastern India Tribal Union (EITU) and the Garo National Council (GNC), on the basis of the Hill State demand swept the polls. The influence of the Congress was considerable in the Mikir Hills and the Hill State demand did not carry much appeal there. The semi-nomadic nature of the Mikir people, low percentage of literacy, a comparatively low economic condition of the Mikir people were some of the reasons for the low political consciousness and involvement of the Mikir. It is said that three or four persons, all of the Congress, command complete loyalty of the whole Mikir community. The level of political consciousness of the people in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo was comparatively more. The preponderance of cash crops, better communication, and a higher percentage of literacy were some of the liberalizing forces which created an aspiration among the people for industrialization. The farmers in these Hills lay a great preference for the purchase of a jeep to market their cash crops, or of setting small fruit preservation units.

After the verdict of the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills in favour of a separate state, the movement gathered momentum and things started taking a

serious turn. On a few occasions there was a threat of direct action. The political tussle took a more or less personal turn and it became a clash of personalities rather than ideologies. The then Chief Minister of Assam had to leave due to this and some other reasons, and was replaced by the present Chief Minister, who is considered a moderate.

The first act of the present Chief Minister was to invite the leaders of the EITU to join the State Cabinet. Capt. Sangma joined as a Minister and was put in-charge of the Department of Tribal Affairs. The hill leaders did not find this arrangement satisfactory for long as "the EITU Minister in charge of Tribal Affairs was confronted with indifference, non-cooperation and even hostility from his Cabinet colleagues" (APHLC, 1968, 4). Hitches were created in 1960 when the State Government of Assam steamrolled the Official Language Bill, and declared Assamese as the Official Language of the State. The Hills people put up a very stiff opposition, but because of their minority in the Assembly, the Bill was passed. Out of disgust, and as a protest, the EITU members of the Government resigned.

In 1960, the All Party Hill Leaders Conference (APHLC) was born. It consisted of all the local parties, like the EITU, GNC, the Swatantra etc., which supported the Hill State movement. Under the APHLC, the movement gained further impetus, and it was reflected in the general elections of 1962, when 53% of the Hill people voted for the Hill State as against 27% opposing it. The formation of a Separate Nagaland was more or less sure by this time, so the Naga Hills was more or less calm, but the Mizo Hills started showing signs of extremist activities. In the 1962 polls, in the Mizo Hills about 72% of the Mizos voted for the Hill State. The APHLC also planned a non-violent direct action, but as it coincided with the Chinese aggression, it was suspended for the time being.

The Hill people's movement for a separate state, which started in full swing in 1962, can be said to have passed through following considerations:

(1) *The Scottish Pattern* (1960). In the wake of the Assam Official Language Act, towards the end of 1960, Pt. Nehru made an offer to the APHLC for full autonomy for the Hill Districts, though within the overall administration of the State of Assam. Under this plan a separate budget allotment (which hitherto was not specifically separate) for the Hill Districts had to be provided. Education, Agriculture and Health were to be completely transferred under the District Councils, with the technical supervision of the State Departments. The Hill leaders found it a "vague and nebulous concept centring round the idea of the hill people enjoining a certain measure of autonomy within the State of Assam. It did not improve significantly over the measures under the VIth Schedule". The APHLC rejected it, though the Congress party in the Hills accepted it.

This formed the main issue in the ensuing elections of 1962. In the contest the APHLC won most of the seats in the Khasi, Jaintia and Garo Hills defeating

the Congress. The Mikir Hills did not support the demand and returned all the Congress candidates. The APHLC candidates, after getting elected, decided not to sit in the House, and resigned. In the 1963 bye-elections held for these vacated seats by the APHLC, the APHLC again contested and captured all the seats as earlier. This trend in the Hill areas made reconsideration imperative in October 1963 and then came the Nehru Plan.

(ii) *The Nehru Plan of Full Autonomy* (1963).—The Plan envisaged a single Cabinet at the State level, but the Minister in charge of Tribal Affairs would enjoy full executive powers for the administration of various subjects concerning the Hill Districts. Any allotment of funds would directly go to the Ministry, rather than the earlier practice of through the Ministry of Finance. The Hill Ministers would have authority to determine the language or languages to be used in the Hill areas. The MLAs of the autonomous Hill Districts would form a Regional Council of the Assam State Assembly, and all proposals relating to the Hill areas would be referred to this Council. Its proceedings would usually be accepted in full by the State Assembly.

This plan faced severe opposition, though this time it was from the ranks of the Congress in the Assam Assembly. On the acceptance of the Plan by the APHLC in early 1964, it was decided that a Commission be appointed to work out the details, but in view of the opposition of the Congress members of the Assam Assembly, this was delayed by about a year. The Commission, appointed in early 1965, and known as the Pataskar Commission, submitted its report in 1966.

(iii) *Pataskar Commission* (1965).—The report of the Commission did not satisfy the Hill leaders; they rather felt, to a great extent rightly, that the Commission instead of making concrete proposals for the implementation of the Nehru Plan, had acted as an Enquiry Commission, and on its own made certain new recommendations. The two recommendations which disturbed the Hill most were, first, about the curbing of the financial powers of the Hill Secretariat and placing it under the State Government, and second, the competence of the Regional Committee to initiate legislative proposals. The APHLC rejected the recommendations as it declined to concede the demand for a separate state. The Commission was of the opinion that the “dissatisfaction with the economic progress of the Hill Districts is at the root of the unsatisfactory general relationship between the two regions—the Hills and the Plains of Assam. It recommended many measures to expand the scope and powers of the District Council, so that they could take effective part in the economic development of their area. Community Development, agriculture, health, roads and waterways, etc. were to be transferred to the District Council. But, at the same time, it also recommended that there was “no necessity for a completely separate administration for the Hill areas”. The APHLC could not accept the last recommendation. They had no comments for the others.



(iv) *The Central Study Team (1961).*—While negotiation on the Nehru Plan were going on, the State Government, while formulating the outlays for the Fourth Plan for the State, considered it fit, in the light of the prevailing political situations, to let the Hill leaders have a greater sense of participation in the process of planning. The Planning Commission sent out a Study Team in 1966, to assess and recommend the outlays for the Fourth Plan for the Hill areas of Assam. Besides making its proposals for the Fourth Plan, the Study Team recommended that, in view of the problems of the Hill Districts, it would be "desirable to forth with to constitute a Planning Board for the Assam Hill Region", which should be given considerable autonomy in matters of "planning and implementation of Schemes for the hill areas" (Singh, 1966, 41). The Team went to the extent of recommending that, the constitution of such a Board could be made even without waiting for the Pataskar Commission Report. The Board was formed without much delay, and it held its first meeting in November 1966. Since then the Board has held eight meetings, and made many suggestions. The Board could not very considerably improve the process of planning and implementation of development programmes for the Hill areas. Lack of departmental coordination and red tapeism reduced it to another cog in the wheel.

(v) *Sub-State Plan (1967).*—The Hill leaders, on their rejection of the recommendations of the Pataskar Commission, were again invited to a Conference table in August 1966, and after much deliberations the "offer of a Sub-State under which the Hill areas would have a separate legislature and Council of Ministers, but it would continue to remain within Assam". This meant that the Pataskar Commission report was bypassed by the Government of India. The Plan of a Sub-State did not meet the demands of the Hill leaders and they rejected it. They also decided to boycott the 1967 general elections. But then they decided to contest the elections and immediately after being elected, resign.

In 1967 a round table conference of the Hill leaders and leaders of the plains was arranged by the Government of India. The Hill leaders refused to cooperate with the meeting, as they felt that the Committee was under pressure to 'suggest a federal structure'.

(vi) *Autonomous Hill State Plan (1968).*—In 1968, the Prime Minister announced that the Government of India had decided to reorganize the State of Assam, by forming a Hill State which would be completely autonomous in certain subjects, while in other matters it would be a partner with the State of Assam. The proposed Hill State will have its own legislature and Council of Ministers to look after their affairs, but the Hill areas will also send representatives to the Assam Assembly, and may have a representative in the State Cabinet. The Governor and the High Court will be common.

This proposal was accepted by the APHLC, and it decided to give it a fair trial. At present the leaders of the Hill Districts, are working in collabo-

ration with the Government of India to finalize the details towards the creations of the Autonomous Hill State (within the general framework of Assam). Under this Plan it was left open for the various Hill Districts of Assam to decide whether they would like to join it or not. At the moment only the KJ Hills and Garo Hills have decided to join, while the Mikir Hills had not yet given its verdict. Mizo Hills, because of its turbulent situation, is out of question. In the KJ Hills there is a section of the hill people who do not like to feel satisfied with anything short of a full Statehood for the Hill areas.\*

The post-independence political development in the Hill Districts, and the movement for a Hill State started out of a feeling of mutual distrust between the people of the plains and Hills of Assam. Political aspirations of each group loomed large. But the economic aspect of the aspirations was in no way insignificant. A hazy feeling of economic backwardness, hazy because it was never spelt out in clear terms by the contending parties, by the people of the Hills, and their neglect at the hands of the plains, a fact substantiated by the various Commissions and Study Teams, always inspired the Hill people to continue their struggle.

The desire for self-rule, mutual distrust of the plains and hills people, the suspected apathy of the plains' people about the economic development of the Hill areas, the relative decline in the activities of the Western missionaries (who by the progress-loving tribal people were considered their real benefactors) were some of the reasons for the separatist movement in the Hill areas.

The relative economic backwardness of the hill areas of the State, compared to the plain areas, is an undoubted fact. It has not only been evoked by the peoples of the Hills districts, but has also been corroborated by various Enquiry Commissions which from time to time went into the problem of economic development of this part of the State. It is interesting to note that though the leaders of the Hills districts have, since the very beginning of their political movements, been pressing for a better deal and for more attention towards the economic needs of the area, they have never pinpointed the specific economic problems and made concrete suggestions.

#### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POLITICAL STABILITY: A RESUME

In view of the fact that a good deal of development activities have been planned and/or undertaken, and many administrative readjustments attempted to achieve political stability, there still remain an expression of neglect, suspicion and unhappiness. There are a number of factors which are responsible for the expression of discontent. I will try to analyze a few major ones:

\*The Meghalaya came into being in 1970—Editor.

1. The State Government of Assam, as constituted after Independence, was an amalgam of heterogeneous groups, with radically different ethnic composition, religion, and political systems. It was an arrangement of circumstances. Parts of Sylhet district came to Assam; Manipur had to remain separate. The first Assam government was a stratified group consisting of various diverse groups (upper and lower Assam, Plains and Hill Tribes, etc.). The stability of the government depended to a great extent on its ability to readjust its resources through the reallocation of roles for each of the different groups. The needs and aspirations, both political and economic of each of the group, were different.

The tradition-bound Hindu community of the plains found it difficult to agree to the idea of collaboration with the tribal population (both Christian and non-Christian); each was doubting the sincerity of the other. The plains people considered the tribals to be more Western than Indian, and thus a feeling of apathy towards them grew. The tribals could never feel confident that they would receive a fair deal at the hands of the plains people.

2. A somewhat fresh lease to the strained relationship of the hills-plains people was given by the VIth Schedule. On the one hand, it sought to give certain preferential benefits to the people of the Hills, as they "needed it in view of their general backwardness and other special problems". On the other hand, it did not make any provision for the full utilization of the "rich tradition of democracy" that each of the tribal cultures had. Dr. Ambedkar, the Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Constituent Assembly had declared that the policy of the VIth Schedule was analogous to the Indian policy in the USA (Cf. Choube (b) 1968). The policy-makers had in mind a sort of a Reserve for the tribal population of the North-Eastern Hills, where programmes of benefit and development could be planned for them, not *through* them. This could have been justified in the initial stages, as the whole nation was experimenting with various forms of administrative policies, but later as more experience was gained, no amendments were made on the basis of the experience gained. One of the "greatest mistakes committed was not actively involving the District Councils in programme planning and implementation". The guiding principle remained that as long as the District Councils are allowed to "make laws relating to inheritance of property, marriage, social customs, etc." it would help the tribal people of the Assam Hills maintain their "rich traditions". It was, rather, felt that this will keep the people of the Hills satisfied. But it did not.

3. The District Councils were empowered to make laws regarding the establishment of Village Councils, but no efforts were made, either in the initial stages or as experience increased, to make them effective bodies. In the light of the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee Report, the principle of three-tier democratic decentralization was introduced in various parts of the country in the form of *Panchayati Raj* (PR). Under this set up, at the village level three

different bodies were established: the Village Panchayat, the Adalat Panchayat and the Cooperative Society, to manage practically most of the development activities at that level. Provisions were made to ensure active collaboration between the three village institutions. No such provisions were made in this part of the country. It would have been advisable that with the introduction of PR in the other parts of the country, the same be extended to the Hill areas by making necessary amendments in the VIth Schedule. This would have been able to avoid many of the complaints (made by the people of the Hills) and the subsequent fissiparous tendencies. It would have ensured a more effective village Council, which it could not be. It had only tried to replace the traditional village councils. The statutory Village Councils could not be expected to be popular and effective only because they have been established through the democratic process of elected representatives. Any innovative practice, if it comes in place of any existing traditional practice, will be acceptable to the people and be effective if it serves the purpose of the people better, than the traditional practices did. The Village Councils established by the District Councils were made judiciary bodies, it was not in their scope to solve the various socio-economic problems of the villagers.

If the District Council and its subsidiary bodies could have been brought into the line of the Zila Parishads, under the framework of Panchayat Raj, many of the present day political problems could have been avoided. Political activity and interest articulation would have concentrated at the District level. It would have created a situation for the emergence of work-oriented, functional leadership, such is the experience in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Mysore, Rajasthan, etc. The pace of economic development may not have changed drastically, but the nature and level of political activities would have changed. Just as the Village Councils did not have significant impact at the village level, similarly the District Councils were unable to make any impact at the district level.

The envisaged new political system, through the process of granting district autonomy, did not conform to the traditional political values of the people in the different Hill Districts. The traditional political systems of the Khasi, the Garo, and the Mikir were of the "dispersed tribal societies" as there was a marked absence of any central figure or institution which would reflect the political or cultural unity of the society as a whole. (Cf. Almond et al., 1960, 254). The Khasi Hills is divided into 16 Siem-ships, 1 Wahdedarship and many Sirdar-ships, each of which under the traditional pattern was a self-contained political unit. Executive, judiciary and defence were subjects confined to each of these political units. In the Garo Hills, under the traditional pattern, disputes were usually settled at the village level by the Nokma (headman), and if it involved a group of villages, the concerned Nokma's along with the Loskor would sit in Council to do justice. The Mikir Hills, as the Khasi and Garo Hills, was a collection of village level political units with a Goanbura as the head. There was no identifiable traditional authority



commanding effective control over the whole tribe, or any centralized structure of government. It was only in the Jaintia Hills, though divided into twelve Elaka, each under a Daloi, which was being ruled by a king. He was a symbol of tribal unity for the Jaintia (Pnar). The introduction of District Councils was an innovative institution which could not effectively replace the traditional political structure at the village level as the contingent functional roles were not replaced by the new emergent roles and status of the statutory bodies. Moreover, no cultural or political spade work was done to create a situation which would envisage a common symbol (at the District level) of identification.

5. Ever since 1959, i.e. seven years after the implementation of the provisions of the VIth Schedule, many Commissions and Committees (Vaghaiwalla Committee, Tarlok Singh Study Team, Pataskar Commission, Dhebar Commission, Elwin Commission etc.) went into the "problems of development" in NE India. Each of these Committees made certain concrete recommendations about financial administration, departmental coordination to ensure speedy execution of development plans concerning the Hill Districts, revitalization of the District Councils, and Community Development, etc. It is surprising to note that no effective follow-up of these recommendations was made by the government. What is still more surprising that these constructive recommendations were never seriously taken up by the leaders of the Hill Districts, nor did they make these issues for their political movement. The various political parties, both of the Hill areas and the plains people (i.e. those opposing a separate state) have issued a number of memorandum of manifesto, but none of them complained about the non-implementation of any of the recommendations of these Committees or Commissions.

6. For a better understanding of the emergent political systems in the Hill Districts, it is necessary to study the character and the variant patterning of the political groups, in the context of their structure, leadership, and goals. None of the political groups, parties, working in the Hill Districts, save the Congress and the CPI, have an all India appeal. But surprisingly enough none of the party activity went below the district level. One unique feature of politics in the Hill District has been that no single party had a universal appeal in all the Districts. Moreover, the oldest parties to work in the Hill Districts have been the Congress (in all the Districts), and the Garo National Council (only in the Garo Hills). With each general election a number of mushroom political parties grew up in each of the District, but did not continue till the next general election.

None of the political parties, not even the Congress, had a hierarchical structure, which could channel the programmes of the party to the lowest level or be used for political communication. Most of the party appeals were centred round the personality of the leader representing it in a particular region. In each general election or in each situation of "crisis" the

local influence leaders, like the Daloi, Lyngdoh, Srien, or Nolema, Church leaders, school teachers, would be approached for support mobilization. It was the personalities which mattered more than the political party.

Political cleavages in the District Council elections were more or less around individual personalities, or sometimes on a particular economic interest of the constituency. In the State Assembly elections they have centred round only against the political issue of increased autonomy or a separate State. Besides the elections, political cleavages are not very significantly active as the political parties do not have much of activity. The main reason for this are mainly three: (i) There is gap between the modern and traditional sector of the village community, or at higher level, as they have no common meeting ground for village development work. The Village Councils did not completely fuse and merge with the traditional village councils of the Daloi, Siem and Nokma. One of the common complaints of the District Councils in Khasi Hills has been that their work has been very much hindered because of the opposition or non-cooperation of the Siem. The Nokma A'king in the Garo Hills made it difficult to effectively implement the plan of Village Regrouping, as a step towards checking jhum cultivation. (ii) There is a marked absence of any political communication between the different sectors of the society or between the political elite and the mass. But it is interesting to note that in the Khasi Hills most of the political parties have started a newspaper, though many of these have not continued for long. (iii) Absence of a formalized structure of the various political parties working in the different Districts. The leadership role and the process of decision making in each of these political parties, including the Congress, is concentrated at the apex, with no ramifications at the lower levels. According to the exigencies of time and convenience local support at village level has been sought through different sources, like the traditional leaders, educated youths or Church leaders. Neither the government nor the political parties have provided a learning situation for the people in the process development and innovative change. The political parties have lacked in not providing a structural network involving the whole community in its activities; the government, on the other hand, has not provided action situations, like an effective BDC or a Village Council, which would have created opportunities for participation in local development and related political activities.

In the absence of any effective forum or opportunity for the people of the Hill Districts to participate in local development through democratic processes, of which each of the tribal community has a rich tradition, discontent and frustration is a natural consequence. Compared to their neighbours in the plains, the people in the Hill Districts are more change-oriented, they are ready to make experiments in alternate ways of life or with economic risks. Christianity and the high incidence of education have liberalized their attitude towards change. They have to be relied upon and provided with appropriate

development programmes, in the absence of which frustration and discontent will be a natural consequence. Much of the present problem is an outcome in a sense of inaction and non-involvement. Many of the present economic situations could have been avoided if the District Autonomy, provided under the VIth Schedule, could have been more effective and meaningful. Political aspirations and activity would, to a great extent have concentrated at the District level, as is evident from the Zila Parishads under the PR, rather than being based on emotional considerations with a hazy comprehension of one's own needs.

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# The Socio-Political System of the Jaintia Tribe of Assam: An Analysis of Continuity and Change

B. PAKEM

## I

Jaintia Hills is one of the sub-divisions of the present United Khasi and Jaintia Hills District of Assam. It lies to the north of East Pakistan, east of Khasi Hills, south of the Nowgong plains and the Mikir Hills, and west of the Cachat Plains and North Cachar Hills. It is situated at an altitude of about 4,500 feet above the main sea level, and covers an area of 3,923.8 square kilometers with a population of 82,147 according to the 1961 Census. Its people are known as the Jaintias (or Syntengs),<sup>1</sup> the generic name for the Pnars, the Wars, the Mikirs (or Bhois) and the Bates (or Hadems) who form the composite population of the sub-division.

Though for a long course of time, this race of independent Chiefs had ruled over a territory on the north-eastern frontier of Bengal, its earliest known history was lost in antiquity.<sup>2</sup> The historians could push its history back only to the sixteenth century of the Christian era.<sup>3</sup> Recently, however, there was an indication that the Jaintia kingdom might have been the old kingdom of Kea-Plh-le (or Kapili) of the Chinese records,<sup>4</sup> in which case the Jaintia history could be dated back to 428 AD.

In this short paper, it is proposed to enquire into the origin, development and change in the socio-political system that prevails in the Jaintia Hills. As original evidences are very scanty, the present writer has to depend mainly on secondary sources, and on his fieldworks during the months of May and June, 1969.

## II

Before the coming of the British, the Jaintias had a three-tier system of government. At the top, there was a Raja (Syiem). Monarchy was hereditary and it passed from the uncle to the nephew. This principle was strictly followed to the extent of keeping the royal blood pure, an absolute condition.<sup>5</sup> His personal rule prevailed only over the conquered territory of the plain areas. In the hills section, the administration was left entirely to the provincial



governors (Dollois). The only symbol of their allegiance to the Raja was an annual tribute of one he-goat from each and every village under their administration. But this was rather ceremonial than political, though technically, a tribute system is symbolic of a basic power system. The Raja was no more than a symbol of unity of the people; and if his activities threatened that unity, the latter would strongly oppose him. On one occasion, he misbehaved himself towards the Dollois of Jowai and Nartiang, by keeping them in chains without consulting a durbar. Thereupon the people rose against the Raja. It was only through the mediation and good offices of Lt. Inglis, a European, that the whole dispute was peacefully settled.<sup>6</sup> This clearly proved that in their relationship with the Raja, the Dollois enjoyed a certain amount of power.

The Dollois were not autocratic rulers either. Their provinces (Raids or Illakas) were really republics though very tiny indeed. The Dollois were elected directly by the people within the respective Raids from among the candidates who should belong to certain clans (Kurs). This privilege was granted to certain clans simply because they were regarded as the original settlers of the Raids concerned. Like the Raja, the Dollois also had to rule according to the popular opinion of the Raid. This was clear from the fact that all the acts of the Dollois would have to be approved of by all the citizens of the Raids, through the general durbars (Durbar Raids). But it would be stretching our imagination too far to agree with the Census Reports for 1961 which said that, "The Syiem or Dolloi personally has no power".<sup>7</sup>

At the lowest rung of the ladder, the people had a village Headman (Waheh Chnong) in each village. There was a village Durbar too in which all the villagers were expected to attend. Like his senior partners in the administration, he could never go against the popular opinion of his village.

Thus in the pre-British period, power belonged not only to the Raja but also shared by the Dollois and their people.<sup>8</sup> The people "appointed their rulers only to supervise their activities".<sup>9</sup> This power relationship between the Raja on the one hand and the Dollois and the people on other could also be proved from the pages of the Ahom-Jayantia Relations, in which the Raja had no power over the people. In spite of so many records<sup>10</sup> of friendly relationship between the hills and the plains, B. C. Allen had to say that:<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the 18th century, the Jaintia Raja had owned himself a vassal of the Ahom king, but he had been unable to carry his own people with him. He submitted, but they rose as one man and massacred the Ahom garrisons that had been posted in the hills.

Probably what B.C. Allen meant was that the Raja was unable to carry his Dollois with him, and not the people.

This incident influenced the Raja so much so that when he was captured by the Ahoms and brought before the Ahom Court, he refused to make any

obeissance to the Ahom king.<sup>12</sup> To punish the Raja, a cloak containing small-pox germs was thrown upon him and as a result of which he died within a few days.<sup>13</sup>

After the death of Raja Ram Singh in 1834, the British on one pretext or another, refused to recognize the new Raja. The British not only dishonoured the Anglo-Jayantia Treaty of March 16, 1824, but also dispossessed the new Raja of his ancestral possession in the plains in 1835. In disgust, the new Raja ceded the hill territories also to the British, who did not want to annex them, at first. The Raja, however, had no right to dispose the hill territories to the British in such a manner. As a consequence the people rose against the British.<sup>14</sup> This clearly proved the fact that the Raja had no control over the people.

For long twenty five years, the people were left to themselves. The only connection they had with the British was the payment of an annual tribute of a he-goat which was previously paid to the Raja. So, in the eyes of the people, paying tribute to the British Officers at Cherraponjee, was just like paying it to their Raja at Jaintiapur. But the moment the British tried to impose their decisions on taxing the people in 1860, rather than the decisions coming from the people, they rose not once but three times against the British.<sup>15</sup> As a tribute system between the Raja and his people was based on common consent, the principle of "no taxation without representation" was also applicable as between the British and the people.

After the Anglo-Jayantia War of 1860-62, the British retained the indigenous devices of traditional democracy. At the same time the power of the Chiefs was curtailed. Now they became only the commission agents of the British, while retaining a semblance of civil and criminal jurisdiction over petty matters. But this reduction of power was only between the Chiefs and the British authorities.

The fact that the Deputy Commissioner of the district had the power to approve the election of the Dolloi also made it clear that the power over the chiefs had passed to the British administration. The people then respected the chief, not so much because they agreed that he should be the chief, as because of the fear of the authority which he derived from the British. So, there was a change in the power concept in Jaintia Hills with the coming of the British. But this change was not felt by the people, as they were ruled by their own chiefs, who belonged to their own tribe. So, as between the Chiefs and the people, the former enjoyed more power than ever before, though that power was simply the radiation of the British power. In fact, in matters of precedence, the Dollois were raised from the third to the first rank. The Chiefs were quite satisfied with the new power they received from the British and the people could not, under such circumstances, start any movement against the strong police system of the British. The result was that the British administration in Jaintia Hills was peaceful until Indian Independence.

## IV

Independence did not bring any major change in the socio-political system of the Jaintias, as it had emerged under the British. The British system seemed to be quite acceptable to the Indian administrators. To some extent of course, this was modified by the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution of India which made a provision for the scheme of administration for the hill areas of Assam. Under this scheme, Jaintia Hills was attached to Khasi Hills, including the then Khasi Native States, but excluding certain portions of Shillong Town, to form one district council.

There were various differences between the Khasis and the Jaintias. But since we are concerned only with the power system, we shall now see the impact that the joint district council had on the traditional institutions of the Jaintias. While the traditional institutions were retained, their powers were greatly reduced. In the case of the village durbars, the Census Reports remarked that, "The present powers of the durbar under the District Council has greatly been reduced in comparison with its powers under the Chiefs".<sup>16</sup> If the District Council could interfere in the village affairs, it was more so in the case of the durbar Raids. The Census Report was again very clear on this point when it added that, "the part of the durbar raid is played by the district council".<sup>17</sup> Precisely, because of this fact, the Dollois were under the control of the district council. But most of the Dollois did not like to part with the power which they had enjoyed under the British, and some even treated the district council with disdain.

Apart from the effects of the operation of the district council on these traditional institutions, there were other factors which made the Jaintias to think in terms of separating themselves from the Khasis. For instance, the United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District had two separate district councils, and the Pawi-Lakher area of the Mizo District had a Regional Council. Further, the liberal attitude of the Assam government, to the Jaintias, hastened the process of separation.

The movement for separation could have been made easier, had it not been for the fact that the two tribes had undergone a process of integration during the British period both socially and culturally. In political matters, too, the two tribes, except the Khasi Native States, were under one administration, and formed a partially excluded area. Further, in the Constituent Assembly, Rev. Nicholas-Roy, a Khasi, was the spokesman for the area. As such, the Jaintias could not do much in expressing their opinion for separation from the Khasis,<sup>18</sup> let alone protest against the detachment of a large chunk of their territory to the Mikirs.

The people could not also start any movement for separation from the Khasis, because by 1946 the separation issue of the hills from the plains of Assam began to emerge. The Jaintias too joined hands with the other hill

tribes in demanding separation from Assam. This created the artificial feeling of oneness between the two tribes. Paradoxically this artificial oneness was broken in the 1960s at the height of the demand for a separate state for the Hill Areas of Assam.

It was the anti-APHLC group that took the initiative for separation from the Khasis. The APHLC group which was in a majority opposed such a scheme of separation as it would weaken their demand for separation from Assam. In between the two, the Government of Assam stepped in and appointed a Commission under the Chairmanship of Shri G. P. Jarman to study the problems of the Jaintias and to recommend appropriate steps for a solution. The Commission, after studying the problems, recommended the separation of the Jaintias from the Khasis.<sup>19</sup> The Government of Assam for its own reasons promptly accepted the recommendations, and the new Jaintia District Council was formed in 1966. Thus, the Government of Assam, which strongly opposed fissiparous tendencies in the State, allowed separation between the tribes. The State Government could have thought in terms of a movement for integration into larger units.

The people of Jaintia Hills were, however, not very happy over such a government decision, though wise it might be. The people wanted to make it their own decision. Though separation was an accomplished fact, the Jaintias, in defiance of the government's decision voted the separatists out of power. Out of twelve elected seats in the new District Council, only two went in favour of the separatists and ten to the anti-separatists (the APHLC). Earlier, there was a demand for referendum. Even if the issue were referred to a referendum, in the light of the above election, the result might have been the same as well. Be that as it may, the people wanted to have their own say in the matter. And now when the anti-separatists (the APHLC) were returned to power, they did not like to merge themselves again into the parent-council. However, in this case, since the views of the government and that of the people coincided, no tension arose. But coincidences are very rare in any history.

So, even after independence, the people valued their traditional democratic ideals in deciding their own fate. Any solution, therefore, to be adopted to meet the political aspirations of the people should receive the approval of the people and not simply the vote of a representative or representatives. Even in the settlement of the present hills problems, the verdict of the people, as differentiated from the verdict of the APHLC, should not be ignored. The emergence of a new political party, the Hill State Peoples' Democratic Party (HSPDP), is very significant. While the APHLC laid stress on the word "leader", the HSPDP put emphasis on the word "people". This may look ridiculous in modern democracy, but traditional democracy cannot be tampered with by modern, complex and large-scale democracy. In the traditional democracy, a representative is really



a representative in the true sense of the term, that is, he must be simply a delegate. And this is exactly what the people expect of their modernized leaders.

V

This leads me to the next question, how is it possible for the people to possess political power. This is possible because of various systems of communications. Besides the above-mentioned traditional democratic institutions, in which people take part, another medium of communication is the market place. The market is "the place from which the... Chief used to operate his administrative, commercial and other functions".<sup>20</sup> Further, in these market places, every subject under the sun would be discussed by the people. People used to come from surrounding places and come into contact with one another. The politicians and sometimes even religious preachers, would use the medium of the market place to reach their hearers. So, in these market places people come to learn about political developments and communicate their ideas to the others. The small traders especially are very instrumental in the process, when they move into the different interior markets, spreading and receiving the informations to and from the people. In this way, the forces of democratic processes are at work accordingly. In the operational side, however, the structure is more responsive than democratic.

The democratic tradition of the people is also to be found in the smallest unit of social organisation—the family. If we could have a peep into the affairs of any clan in the area, the democratic tradition could be found right there. The people used to have the family or clan council (*durbar Kur*). This council is not a regular body, but it meets whenever it is necessary to do so. The decision in the council is made through a democratic process. During my fieldwork, I had the privilege to attend such a council in the X family. The oldest member of the family or the clan simply presided and all the members of the family took part in the discussion. The subject matter for discussion was over the sale of property. The meeting was held for two hours, after which the general consensus was to dispose of the property. The oldest member then announced the decision all the members, and the decision was carried out the next morning. So, the democratic tradition is ingrained among the people, because they have a democratic type of family. The Jaintia family is neither a matriarchal family, as some would like to say, nor a patriarchal family. It is not an adult centre family either. It is just a democratic family.<sup>21</sup>

The next medium of communication is the church set up by the Christian Missions in the 1840s. The majority of the Christians in the area are Presbyterians. The Presbyterian Church being based on democratic lines, its followers used to meet in a democratic atmosphere. The Presbyterian Church in Jaintia Hills, unlike the Presbyterian Churches elsewhere, is so

much democratic, that occasionally, it appears to be "ultra-Democratic",<sup>22</sup> if not individualistic. There are other Churches, besides the Presbyterian Church, on which I am not really competent to say anything. Nevertheless, these other Churches too bring people from different areas into contact with one another or in their periodical, annual meetings. The effect of the church on the people is profound, as all the churches in the area fall either in the mystical priestly group or in the moral prophetic group. It is also true that the intellectual critical group is beginning to emerge but the number is very negligible.

The other important institution in Jaintia Hills was the Jaintia Durbar which was established in 1900. As the traditional institutions were reduced in importance, there was a feeling that such a durbar should be set up, through which the grievances of the people could be ventilated to the British authorities. The durbar was composed of the representatives of the provincial durbars (Durbar Raids) which were known as sub-durbars for the purpose. The representatives would present their requirements to the Jaintia Durbar, which in turn, forwarded the scheme to the government. The scheme worked very well and the people were very much benefitted by its existence.

In the beginning, the Jaintia Durbar was simply an organization, a pressure group if you will. Though it recommended all the candidates in the 1937 and 1946 elections, it was not a political party, as it did not set up its own candidate. Only after independence, it developed itself into a political party, when it set up its own candidate in the 1952 General Elections. No sooner had it turned itself into a political party than it signed its own death warrant. It became defunct in the early sixties over the issue of a Scottish Pattern of Administration for the Hills. It was very sad and tragic that such an organization which had done much for the people should turn itself into a political party and thereby lost the support of the people. A political party is, after all, a political party and not a people's party.

After independence, however, new situations emerge. The traditional Raja, who was substituted by the British Sub-Divisional Officer, gave way to the District Council under the Sixth Schedule for tribal affairs and to the Indian Sub-Divisional Officer for other affairs. Paradoxically, these new situations are a threat to the traditional democracy of the people. It may even be said that with the dawn of independence and especially with the setting up of the district council, the period of an "erosion of democracy" in the area begins.

These new situations emerge when the traditional leadership has passed into the educated minority. The literate few then dominate not only the political scene but also the traditional chiefs who are now under their control. They also dominate the local press and make the people more perplexed with their news items. The result is confusion, because these educated few do not accept, though they realize perhaps, the fact that power is still with the people.

## VI

The brief survey on the socio-political system in Jaintia Hills, therefore, convinces one that people's greatest need is participation in the governmental activities. Under the present arrangement, the people are kept out of the decision making agencies of the government. Periodical elections are no substitutes for active participation. Participation was the keynote of Jaintia politics in the past; and now it should not be otherwise, if misunderstandings were to be avoided.

This should be borne in mind while dealing with the Tribal People. None of the three views—the isolationists, the assimilationists and the revivalists<sup>23</sup> seems to be the correct approach to the present tribal situation. To my mind, integrative approach would be preferable, since integration, unlike these three views, is a two-way traffic. Unless each side is ready to accept a policy of give and take, there can be no integration of the tribals. Nehru was quite clear on this point when he said that if the tribals.<sup>24</sup>

feel you have come to impose yourselves upon them or that we go to them in order to try and change their methods of living, to take away their lands and to encourage our businessmen to exploit them, then the fault is ours, for it only means that our approach to the tribal people is wholly wrong.

The same idea was expressed by Dr. Rajendra Prasad when he said that, "it should be left to them (the tribals) to choose whether they would like to be assimilated with, and absorbed by, the surrounding society, or would like to maintain their own separate tribal existence".<sup>25</sup>

The attitude of the people to the government then depends on how the government should meet their aspirations. Whether the area is under the Assam Government or the Hills Government, a certain type of autonomy is necessary. If I am permitted to say, perhaps, cultural autonomy would be better.

By cultural autonomy, I should like to include among other things,<sup>26</sup> traditional democracy which has become a part of their culture. Traditional democracy is for decentralization, whereas modern democracy tends towards centralization. Even under the concept of a Welfare State, centralization is unavoidable. And there is nothing more abominable to a Jaintia than a far away centralized authority. That is why they rose against the British and recently separated themselves from the Khasis. Now when they have their own district council, they pay their taxes. So, it is not so much their hatred against taxes as to the imposition of taxes by a far away centralized authority, be it the British Government or the United Khasi-Jaintia Hills District Council. They want to decide for themselves and not by an outside authority.

Another important part of that cultural autonomy is in the sphere of religion. It is very unfortunate that the hill peoples' loyalty to India has

been questioned by a section of the press in the country from time to time. This is not a question of defending Christianity nor the foreign missionaries as such. But, I should like to point out that now-a-days, the Jaintias do not attach a religious stigma to any person. In fact, in 1952, the people elected a non-Christian to the State Assembly, in spite of the fact that the Christians were in a majority. And presently, a non-Christian is also included in the Executive Body of the Jowai District Council.

One thing should be clear about the people in matters of religion. They had been mixing with the Hindus and the Muslims for hundreds of years, but they never embraced Hinduism<sup>27</sup> nor Islam. Nor did they impose their tribal religion and culture on their conquered Hindu and Muslim subjects. They believed in what probably may be called religious toleration. And now when they have accepted Christianity, they want no interference. It is their choice to accept any religion with a least resistance to their old and sometimes forgotten tribal religion,<sup>28</sup> and Christianity is one of such religions. As such any attempt to disturb Christianity in the area would be strongly opposed by the people. Dr. Rajendra Prasad had rightly remarked that:<sup>29</sup>

There can be, and should be, no idea or intention of forcing anything on them (the tribals) either by way of religion, language or even mode of living and customs. Even where we feel that the religion or the life that is offered is better than theirs, there is no justification for forcing it upon them against their will.

Finally, the scheme of cultural autonomy would also include the sphere of economic development. In the past, a flourishing trade existed between the area and the plains of Sylhet, now in East Pakistan. After partition, however, economic disruptions took place. The Assam plains could not replace the Sylhet plains overnight. The tragedy, however, is that even today, the same situation prevails. While depending on the inflow of commodities to its markets from other parts of India, the perishable products of the area turn waste, due to lack of immediate outlets to the Assam plains. The result is the growing indebtedness of the area. It is not that the people want to be kept isolated, but rather that the government fails during all these years to break through this economic isolation created by the partition. Fortunately, the grass on the other side of the border is not always greener. Jaintia Hills is in a dangerous situation, unless effective steps are taken to break through this economic isolation. Whom to blame if the people are forced to establish their economic contacts with East Pakistan?

Perhaps it is never too late for the government to turn its attention towards the development of agriculture, trade and industries in the area, besides education. Natural resources, like coal, limestone, forest and water resources



are in abundance. Cement factory, paper industry and fruit industry can be set up along with the other small scale industries. If the economic unrest of the people cannot be settled, there will always be a danger from across the border. Economic reasons should not stand in the way of such developments; and no cost should be considered too high for such development activities. The government should not depend on statistics alone, as the amount of expenditures on development works cannot be properly verified, in the absence of an audit system in the district council. The Pataskar Commission of 1965 had rightly suggested for such a scheme in all the district councils. Unfortunately, the scheme has now been shelved under the cold storage.<sup>30</sup> The government should have realized that it is the people, and not the principles nor the tribal policies, that matters much.

But one word of caution is necessary while emphasizing the need for economic development in the area. Any kind of development should always be development with dignity, otherwise economic development would bring disaster to the tribal people. Varrier Elwin had rightly pointed out that:<sup>31</sup>

Mere economic advance will have little value if the discipline and standards of society are destroyed and the spiritual ideas of life are lost. . . . We should strike a balance between stability and change. In any such balance the most important way of safeguarding even the spiritual and psychological stability of the people is through land. The tribes will never feel fully integrated with India unless they have a stake in the land to which they belong.

Considering the viewpoints of the Jaintias, and the other tribals too, I believe a response is always forthcoming. The government should not fight shy of the difficulties. Rather it should take advantage of the goodwill of the tribal people in striving towards the goal of integration. As in other spheres of activities, here too, co-operation is very essential. In our approach to the tribal problems, there should be no such idea of a "brown man's burden". In closing, I should like to quote a concluding part of the findings of the Scheduled Areas and the Scheduled Tribes Commission 1960, which rings true even today. It said:<sup>32</sup>

The most hopeful feature is that the tribal himself has awakened to the need of finding a solution and is responding. The aim of the country is to secure the advancement of the tribals without disturbing the essential harmony of their life and securing their integration without imposition. We have, viewed the tribal problem from this wider angle of the interest of the tribals, the need for maintaining harmony and integration.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Jaintias thoroughly despised the word "Synteng" because the Khasis associated it with the word "Sahteng" which means either the people who were "left behind" in their westward migration, or simply a "backward" community. However, according to Dr. S. K. Chatterji, in his "*Kirta-Jana-Kriti*", the word Jaintia (Zantain or Zonten) was derived from the word "Synteng". And I should like to add further, that the word Synteng, in its turn, was derived from the word "Sutunga" (Suteng), the ruling dynasty of the Jaintias. Or it may be derived from the word "Sohmynting" (Smynting or Synting), a village through which the Khasis used to come to Jaintia Hills before the present road communication. So, the two words can be used interchangeably. See also Barch, H., *History and Culture of the Khasi People*, Shillong, 1968, p. 13.
2. *Memorial of Rajendra Sing, Raja of Jayantiapore*, July 18, 1936.
3. Bhuyan, S. K., *Jayantia Buranj*, DHAS, Gauhati, 1937, pp. i-xiii.
4. Saleore, B. A., *India's Diplomatic Relations with the East*, Bombay 1960.
5. Dalton, E. T., *Enthology of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1872, pp. 54-55.
6. Lahiri, R. M., *The Annexation of Assam, 1824-54*, Calcutta, n.d., pp. 151-53.
7. *Census Report of India, 1961*, Vol. III, Pt. VI, No. 13, p. 29.
8. Here, the word "people" is used in a very restricted sense. It is not possible to find out anywhere in the world, not even the Landsgemein of Switzerland, in which all the people take part in the State, Any traditional or even modern democratic is, in reality, either oligarchy or aristocracy, or a dictated democracy, if you will. Throughout this paper, the word "people" is used in this sense only.
9. *Census Reports of India, 1961*, Vol. III, Pt. VI, No. 13, p. 29.
10. Bhuyan, S.K., *Jayantia Buranj*, DHAS, Gauhati, 1937. See also Bezbaruah, P., "History Yells: The Hills and the Plains of Assam are but one", Translation from Assamese in Chaliha, P., *The Outlook of NEFA*, Jorhat, 1955, pp. 101-05.
11. Allen, B. C., *District Gazetteer*, 1905, p. 52 from Records.
12. Bhuyan, S. K., *Jayantia Buranj*, DHAS, Gauhati, 1937, p. xiii and Portrait in the frontpiece.
13. Bhuyan, S. K., *Kachari Buranj*, DHAS, Gauhati, 1951, pp. 144-49.
14. Lahiri, R. M., *The Annexation of Assam 1824-54*, Calcutta, p. 157.
15. Mackenzie, A. A., *History of the Relations of the Government with the Hill Tribes of the NEF of Bengal*, Calcutta, 1884, pp. 240-41. See also Hunter, W. W., *Statistical Account of Assam*, Vol. II, London, 1879, pp. 206-07 and Dutt, K.N., *Landmarks of the Freedom Struggle in Assam*, Gauhati, 1958, pp. 27-8.
16. *Census Reports of India, 1961*, Vol. III, Pt. VI, No. 13, p. 46.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
18. As early as 1947, late S. Barch of Jowai and others pleaded before the Bardoloi Committee, for a separate District Council for the Jaintias, but Rev. Nicholas-Roy, with certain promises of equal treatment, pressurized them to drop the idea. See *Report of the United Khasi-Jaintia Autonomous District Commission in the matter of creation of a new autonomous District for the Jowai Sub-Division*, Shillong, 1964.
19. See *Report of the United Khasi-Jaintia Autonomous District Commission in the matter of creation of a new autonomous District for the Jowai Sub-division*, Shillong, 1964.
20. *Census Reports of India, 1961*, Vol. III, Pt. VI, No. 13, p. 12.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 45.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
23. Ghurye, D. S., *The Scheduled Tribes*. Bombay, 1963, p. 173.

24. Elwin, V., *A New Deal for Tribal India*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, 1963, p. 138.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Like languages, beliefs, faiths, customs and traditions, which require no elaboration.
27. Though the Jaintia Raja was converted into Hinduism, the Brahmins regarded him only as an orthodox Sudra (Dalton, T. E., *Ethnology of Bengal*, Calcutta 1872, p. 54). His people in the hills, however, preferred an egalitarian society, and did not embrace Hinduism thereby. Yet the influence of Hinduism was apparent when beef-eating was abandoned later.
28. *Census Reports of India 1961*, Vol. III, Pt. VI, No. 13, p. 15.
29. Elwin, V., *A New Deal for Tribal India*, Ministry of Home Affairs, 1963, p. 138.
30. *Summary of Pataskar Commission's Report on the Hill Areas of Assam*, Information and Publicity Department, Shillong, pp. 8-9.
31. Elwin, V., *A New Deal for Tribal India*, Ministry of Home Affairs, New Delhi, p. 136.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 140.





D

Agrarian Issues and  
Development



# Land Scarcity and Land Hunger Among some Aboriginal Tribes of Western Central India

STEPHEN FUCHS

THE aboriginal tribes whose land scarcity and land hunger shall here be discussed are the Bhils, Bhilalas and Korkus. The Bhils are most probably a pre-Dravidian hunting and cultivating tribe spread over the hilly western parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat and Maharashtra. Their entire strength is over 38 lakhs. The Bhils under this survey, however, reside mainly at the western end of the Vindhya and Satpura ranges and number a little over five lakhs. Their staple food is maize. The Bhilalas are a subsection of the Bhils which, according to their own traditions, has received a strong admixture of Rajput blood. This gives them a right to claim a social status superior to that of the Bhils. But they are also better farmers than the Bhils, working harder and more consistently. In 1961 their number was 142,569 (NCAER: 10). The Korkus, on the other hand, belong to the Munda group and form its western-most section, separated from the mother stock by an influx of Dravida-speaking tribes from the South. In 1961 their number was 204,524 (Census of India 1961: 286 and 291). It is significant that the Bhils and Bhilalas in the Vindhya and Satpura Hills do not live in closed villages, but usually in small clusters of homesteads built on their own fields. The Korkus, on the other hand, live in villages consisting of two rows of huts facing each other over a wide open space.

The reasons of the land scarcity and subsequently for the land hunger of these tribes are mainly the following:

1. They have been ousted from the more fertile tracts of their original habitats by the invasion and infiltration of superior agricultural peoples. About the twelfth century AD the Rajputs invaded in great numbers the land of the Bhils and in long and ruthless wars of attrition wrested ownership of the best and most fertile lands from the aboriginal tribes of western Central India. Later, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the Marathas conquered western Central India and invited various agricultural Hindu castes, such as the Kunbis, to settle on the land originally belonging to the tribals and to cultivate it more intensively and profitably. Bhils and Korkus who opposed the forcible occupation of their lands were treated by the Marathas with great

cruelty (R.V. Russell and Hiralal: 262). The final outcome was that the tribals were deprived either by force of the more fertile lands or they themselves withdrew to the still unoccupied hills where they could better escape the domination of the recent invaders and keep intact their tribal customs and ways of life. Thus in present times the Bhils, Bhilalas and Korkus find themselves in the more remote hilly tracts of Central India, on fields that generally give a poor yield, on a terrain that has been much eroded and deprived of its fertile soil, in inaccessible jungle areas without roads and means of communication, in regions where the climate is trying and water is scarce.

2. In a less violent, slower and more round-about way the take-over of tribal lands by non-tribals goes on apace in present times despite protective legislation. The Land Enactment of 1960 prohibits the sale of their tribal land to non-tribals, but loopholes can be found in every law, and tribal lands do change hands fairly frequently. It is now mainly by economic exploitation that the tribals are forced to part with their land and to hand it over to the agricultural Hindu and Muslim castes. The tribals are proverbially improvident and often find themselves without cash and provisions when they need them most urgently. Then they take refuge to the money-lenders who often charge them not only a high interest but often write out fraudulent promissory notes to the illiterate borrowers. In western Central India tribals who borrow seed grain at the time of the sowing season from a merchant are commonly charged fifty per cent interest. For every *seer* of grain borrowed they have to return 1½ *seers* after the harvest. Money-lenders are in the habit of giving one *maund* of cottonseeds to the farmers and in return taking an equal quantity of cotton after the harvest (NCAER: 71). Moreover, all tribals are forced at certain times, during wedding and funeral feasts, caste trials, in sickness, etc., to procure comparatively large sums of money at short notice. Again they must borrow at high interest from rapacious money-lenders. Sometimes their bullocks die and they are unable to replace them. Many tribals are addicted to heavy drinking and are heavily indebted to the owners of liquor shops. In the hours of greatest need and pressure they are often obliged to pawn their fields. Non-tribal farmers persuade them to let their fields be cultivated by them when the tribals lack bullocks or seed grain. Once such an agreement has been gone into, the tribal owners of a field find it very difficult to recover it. Further, in the tribal regions so remote from larger business centres, market places and railway lines—sometimes the nearest railway station is over eighty miles away from their villages—the tribal farmers are obliged to sell their crops to merchants who visit them. These often offer a cheap price for the farm products the tribals have to sell, while they sell their own merchandise to them at a high rate. By this indirect exploitation the economic situation of the tribals always remains very precarious, and any extra-expenses can only be met by borrowing from the money-lenders. The latter lend their money often in the hope of taking over their debtors' fields in case they are unable to repay their debts.



It is true that cooperative banks have been opened by government to cater particularly for the needs of the tribals; there is one such bank at Jhabua. But the procedure for obtaining a loan is slow and complicated, and securities are demanded which the tribals are not prepared or able to furnish. Moreover, loans are usually restricted to needs connected with the farm; they are not granted to help out in personal needs.

3. The land scarcity and land hunger of the tribals in western Central India is aggravated by the fact that these tribes regard agriculture as practically the only possible traditional occupation permitted to them. An exception is perhaps made for members of their community who get engaged in government service or in clerical or teaching jobs, or in road and construction work; but manual work in any other form is forbidden and a member of these tribal communities engaged in another such occupation is punished with expulsion from the tribe.

Thus 87.3 per cent of the total Bhil and Bhilala male workers in Madhya Pradesh were in 1961 engaged in farm or forest work, while among the Korkus of Madhya Pradesh the percentage of those so employed was 95 per cent (Census of India 1961: 74-5).

Since other occupations are closed to these communities by tribal law the scarcity of land available for cultivation is the more oppressive. The tribals of Central India are, unfortunately, obsessed by the fear of losing the social status of a respectable caste in Hindu society where they to get engaged in any manual labour other than farming or forest work. Since workers of any craft are lower in social rank than farmers these tribes find that they cannot adopt any such occupation. Though they are skilled in all types of manual work, they cannot undertake such work for wages without the danger of excommunication. The reason is that all these tribes want to keep up the pretence that they are Kshatriyas, and more exactly, Rajputs. Therefore they must avoid any occupation closed to Rajputs. The more Hinduised the tribals are the stricter they keep to farm or forest work, even if it means life-long starvation and serfdom. Tribals who have lost their fields prefer to live as field labourers on starvation wages rather than to accept any other occupation however remunerative. Bhilalas and Korkus are particularly strict in this regard.

4. Another factor which accentuates the land scarcity and land hunger of these tribes is the rapid increase of their population in the last decades. The population explosion in India is to some extent evident even among the Bhils and Bhilalas in Central India. Their numbers have increased from 2,257,983 in 1931 to 3,831,164 in 1961, that is by 58.9 per cent in thirty years. Land scarcity is particularly acute among the Bhilalas who are generally much averse to accepting employment as farm labourers, but prefer to live as independent farmers or tenants. It is a custom among them that the elder sons leave the paternal home and village and settle at some other place where land

is available for cultivation. In this manner the Bhilalas have spread more widely over western Central India, and have in recent times even migrated to the Raisen and Sehore districts of the Bhopal Division (Census of India: 438). But new land is getting scarce even in these regions and in the near future the Bhilalas will be unable to purchase new fields and to start farms of their own.

5. The situation of the tribals is worsened also by the fact that their fields have generally a low productivity. The average income of an acre of cultivated land in tribal Madhya Pradesh is only Rs. 71, while the all-India average is Rs. 152 per cent (NCAER: 20). The reasons for the low yield are various:

- (a) Poor, stony soil, lack of fencing round the fields, paucity of irrigation facilities and employment of very crude techniques and implements of cultivation.
- (b) Preference of the tribals for low value and coarser crops such as maize, small millets and other grains of inferior quality.
- (c) Plough cattle of the poorest quality, underfed and badly looked after by the tribal farmers.
- (d) Indifference to field work and lack of attachment to the land. In the seasons when they can earn their livelihood by food collection in the jungle or by fishing, they often neglect their field work and consequently their crops suffer. In the hot season, instead of preparing their fields for the new sowing, they prefer to pay social visits and attend weddings and other feasts.
- (e) Bad quality of seed grain. The tribal farmers generally use for seeds the grain that they had just harvested from their own fields. Nor do they practise crop rotation.
- (f) They do little or nothing to protect their fields against erosion or against such pernicious weeds as *khas* grass. Deep ploughing would be the remedy, but the hilly terrain, the weak plough cattle and the thin layer of soil prevent this.
- (g) The tribal farmers are largely ignorant of the use of fertilisers. But even if they had recognised their value, they would lack the money to buy them.

6. The poor yield of the land cultivated by the tribal farmers in western Central India requires comparatively large plots of field to support an average family. But the arid and stony nature of the hills which they inhabit renders the land scarcity still more acute. In Jhabua District, for instance, in the heart of the Bhil country, only 32.4 per cent of the 68,000 square kilometers of the whole area are under cultivation, 37 per cent are uncultivable land (NCAER: 71).

It is certainly no exaggeration to state that of the cultivable land in Jhabua District the best fields are owned by non-tribals. Moreover, since the Bhils, unlike the Bhilalas, do not emigrate but divide their land among the sons in equal parts, the land holdings are often very small. The whole cultivable land

of Jhabua District is divided among 50,000 farmer families. The average holding per family is consequently just a little of eight acres.

Of the three tribes under study, the Bhilalas are comparatively well off. In the worst condition are the Bhils, who are indeed wretchedly poor living as they do in the bare, stony and waterless hills of the Vindhya.

As mentioned above, the Bhils and, though to a lesser degree, the Bhilalas and Korkus, did not suffer the despoliation of the best lands by the non-tribal invaders without a bitter fight. Throughout the nineteenth century they carried on a kind of guerilla warfare against the usurpers of their land making frequent raids on the villages and travellers and retreating into the hills when pursued by well equipped police or army contingents. This habit of theirs resulted in being branded as "Criminal Tribes" by the British administrators who were keen on establishing peace and order in Central India on the basis of the then existing situation. Thus the Bhils were not prepared to accept and they frequently revolted and fought back. Their opposition was ruthlessly and effectively crushed by the superior weapons and strategy of the British administration. But the Bhils retaliated and up to recent times they could not be fully pacified. In western Central India the rate of criminality is very high. In the Alirajpur section of the Jhabua District it is perhaps highest in the world, twice as high as in Chicago. In 1961 the number of dacoity cases was 15 times higher than in the rest of Madhya Pradesh, the number of robberies six times and that of cattle thefts four times higher. Murder cases were four times higher than in the rest of Madhya Pradesh. "Broadly speaking theft and murder are the two most important crimes in this area. Housebreaking occupies the third and rape and abduction the fourth place" (T.B. Naik: 19-20).

In recent years there was a strong increase of criminality in the whole Jhabua District: murders increased from 99 in 1961 to 120 in 1965, dacoity from 7 to 80, robbery from 24 to 74, house-breaking from 206 to 619, cattle lifting from 254 to 448, and thefts from 212 in 1961 to 341 in 1965. (K. Knobl: 141).

Land scarcity and land hunger are certainly not the only motives for the high criminality of the Bhils and Bhilalas and its recent sharp increase, but undoubtedly they are two important reasons for it. It may even be conceded that this high degree of criminality is a proof of the strong vitality of the Bhils—there is still some fight left in them. They have not yet been completely subdued and are not yet fully resigned to their fate. This fighting spirit of theirs gives reason to the hope that one day the Bhils might recover their proper place in the mainstream of Indian life and grow into full and mature membership of the Indian nation.

Remedies which suggest themselves for the improvement of the economic conditions of the tribals in western Central India have already been repeatedly proposed. It is the implementation of these proposals that is still lacking. It

might therefore be necessary to state them once more:

1. The tribals need above all a better all-round education. This will make them aware of their rights as citizens of India and give them the courage to claim their rightful privileges. It will protect them against the exploitation by merchants, money-lenders and petty officials. It will give them a new zest for life and prevent them from falling into lethargy and passive despair.

2. The tribals must be taught the dignity of labour, whether on the farm or in any other form, in the home or in any other form, in the home or in a factory. They should be persuaded to allow members of their community to take up any occupation open to them and sufficiently remunerative. Provision should also be made to make such occupations available to tribal workers in order to relieve pressure on the land.

3. The tribals should be taught better farming methods and provision should be made for irrigation, fertilisers and an improvement of the livestock so that in the course of time they would reach at least the all-India average of yield per acre.

4. The tribals should be more effectively protected against the exploitation by non-tribals. At least the already existing laws for their protection should be adequately enforced.

Surely, even if no more land for cultivation can be made available to these rapidly increasing tribes, its yield could be raised considerably by better methods of cultivation, by the use of fertilisers and a better quality of seeds. But finally the surplus of tribal labour would have to be diverted to industry and other means of earning a living. On the other hand, the Government of India in the interest of internal peace and order must take all necessary precautions against the exploitation of the violent character of the tribals by unscrupulous politicians and demagogues for their own selfish anti-national schemes to the detriment of the whole Indian nation. This can only be achieved by the effective alleviation of the real grievances of the tribals. Only then can they be fully integrated and made to grow into full and equal fellowship with the rest of the Indian nation while retaining their original racial cultural and religious identity.

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# Agrarian Issues in Chotanagpur

K. SURESH SINGH

## THE ADMINISTRATION

The administrative anthropologists' approach to agrarian history in its early phases had been far too simplistic. They described the tribals as isolates, and in their eagerness to explain the agrarian ills that overtook the tribals in the 19th century, they traced these to the influx of non-tribal peasant castes and the "corrupting" Hindu influence on the tribal chiefs in the regions. The process of land grants to the Brahmins in tribal areas could be traced to the early medieval period; but the developments that they stressed occurred in the later medieval period. With their exclusive concern with the tribal problems, they overlooked the operation of the historical processes that led to the formation of a composite society in the wake of the migration of peasant and non-peasant communities and the penetration of formative cultural and religious influences in the Central Zone. It is evident that in the exposed tribal regions, the portrayal of a tribal as Noble Savage, innocent of the operation of the historical processes, was both naive and untenable, but this led to the build-up a myth that has formed part of the agrarian developments in Chotanagpur.

We may note two outstanding features of the agrarian developments in the 19th century in tribal areas. The first was the disintegration of rural communities as a result of the imposition of the *zamindari/ghatwali* systems of land tenure on tribal organisation and the introduction of cash economy, particularly from the latter half of the 19th century. In tribal areas, these two processes worked with greater acceleration and had far-reaching repercussions on tribal society because tribal communities in their isolated habitat were sensitive to outside influences. This explains the larger crop of uprisings and movements in tribal as compared to those in non-tribal tracts.

## IMPACT OF POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

Political movements among the tribes tended to obscure agrarian issues since the Christian Sardars broke with the missionaries and sought, under the leadership of Birsa Munda at the turn of the century, a political solution of the agrarian problems. The passage of the Chotanagpur Tenancy (CNT)

Act (1908) led to the establishment of agrarian peace. Between 1910 and 1935 the Tana Bhagat movement among the Oraons and the Unnati Samaj Movement among the educated Christian tribals, under the influence of the national Non-Cooperation movement, adopted an attitude which was 'antagonistic to landlords and distrustful of government'. In 1922, when the government struck at the Tana Bhagat movement, the two movements dissociated themselves from politics and confined their activities to achieve religious and economic improvement of the tribes. It is, however, significant that it was the Congress Movement led by non-tribals that organised the Kherwars and Nagesias in their protest against the three lingering agrarian ills: *harai* (free use of plough by zamindars), *begari* (free labour) and *khetkutta* (right to produce of the tree). The Jharkhand movement, which developed in the forties, had no clear-cut agrarian programme, beyond the repetition of the old slogan of restoring all lands to tribals. In fact, there were elements in the movement that later tended to dilute agrarian issues. Some of the leaders of the movement in the initial stages were closely associated with the government, which was chary of agrarian movements among the tribes. A close relation existed between the movement and the missionaries who had been warned against indulging in agrarian issues. The British Government from the 1880s had discouraged the missionaries from participating in or supporting large-scale agrarian movement, which at one stage led to a marked accession of strength to different missions. There was also the awareness of the fact that the *adivasis* by themselves who did not constitute a majority except in the Ranchi district. This led to the gradual widening of the political platform of the Jharkhand party to include many non-tribals, some of whom could be identified as *dikus*.

Of late, the tribals have turned to the *Sarvodaya* and to an extremist political movement for a redressal of their grievances. The first with its programme of non-alienation of land outside the village community, and establishment of a village community evokes nostalgic memories among the tribes of their own communitarian village system. This explains some significant achievements of the *Gramdan* and *Bhoodan* movements in tribal areas. But the failure to ensure an effective follow-up and the opposition of some religious groups wedded to the concept of private property explains the subsequent failure of this programme. Compared to this, the extremist movement offers a tantalising prospect: the road to power in tribal heart land of India lies through Srikakulam, Bastar and Chotanagpur. Since the close of 1967 the Birsas have raised its voice against the *dikus* and the unscrupulous moneylenders who have swallowed up their lands, and against the exploitation of the resources of Chotanagpur by outsiders, while their own people continue to wallow in poverty and penury; they have drawn attention to the problem of the educated unemployed and to the tardy manner in which

the persons who have lost their lands to industrial undertakings have been rehabilitated. The agrarian programme propagated through dancing and music on convivial occasions is, however, rather vague. There is an element of exaggerated hope and fear in it, which is so characteristic of the tribal agrarian movements in the past.

#### PRIMEVAL AGRARIAN MYTH

It will be pertinent to trace in this connection the root of the myth underlying the slogan 'all lands to the tribals', which has survived with an extraordinary pertinacity in the region. The root of this myth could be found in the ideas of the Sardars, which were shaped by their folk memory and by the education they had received in mission schools. The Kol and Tamar Insurrections in the early decades of the 19th century did not appear to have been stimulated by the concept of a Golden Age of the Mundas. The Sardars became conscious of this as interpreted by the Mission historians. The original tribal order was described as one of Arcadian simplicity:

The Kols, Mundaries and Uraons are the aboriginals of the district. In ancient times they had no kings and no chiefs and were divided into families, and kept together by their "*Parhas*" or Conferences. The fields they had cleared and prepared were their own, yet the whole land belonged to them. After a time a part of the Uraons and Mundaries in the new so-called *Bhooinhar patti* of Chotanagpur chose a king and for his maintenance gave him a grant in land, viz., half of the fields of each village. The better half—the Kols—kept for themselves as their own and this they retained possession without any rent for it till the establishment of the British courts in 1832. (Halдар)

Such a view of history overlooked the essentially composite character of the society in the exposed tribal region. Under its spell the tribes would demand nothing short of a restoration of the state of things that prevailed before the influx of the "aliens". This was bad history and worse logic. An observer wondered:

As regards the renewal of the primitive Arcadian State so much desired by the petitioners it seems to me that it would be quite as reasonable for the British Government to aid the Kols in the fulfilment of their desire as to restore to the Hindus the whole of Hindustan and not only to withdraw their own government but also to help the Hindus in driving away the Musalmans from it. It is historically true that the Aryan Hindus by some means or other had reduced the Kols of Chotanagpur to a state of serfdom. When law and order were introduced into the country by the British Government the Kols began gradually to realise their actual position; the European Christian missionaries came in and took

the Kols by the hand. The crude traditions of the Mundas and Uraons thus found development by association with men of higher culture into an ideal picture of a happy state of innocence in olden days; and as interchange of thought increased under the fostering influence of internal peace and new of struggles going on elsewhere was brought home to the Kols, the idea of their supposed rights attained the highest pitch of extravagance. The Government cannot but leave these ideas alone. (Haldar)

The myth explains the disastrous failure of the Sardar movement in the 19th century. But the hang-over persists; it does not still make for a rational and dispassionate consideration of the agrarian issues.

#### DIKUS VS. THE 'AUTOCHTHONES'

The concept of *diku* is crucial to the understanding of agrarian relations in tribal region.' The word *diku* is derived from the Mundari "ko" or the allied Korkhu "*di-ku*", which means 'the others' or the 'aliens'; it does not belong as popular believed, to *sadani*, and mean those who annoy or irritate (*dik*). *Diku* is a territorial and ethnic concept applicable to the categories of land-grabbers and money-lenders belonging to both Hindu and Muslim communities, who came from outside the identifiable culture area. It does not extend to cover the category of exploitative elements in tribal social structure or even among those groups which have been traditionally on intimate terms with the tribes, and which have been recognised as part of the larger social complex and the regional system such as the *Nagbansi* chiefs (the latter have been ritually related as younger brothers to the Mundas). A distinction has always been made by the tribes between the *jagirdars* and *zamindars* who had lived among them for centuries and those who come from outside in the first or second decade of the 19th century. The former were the predecessors of the *Nagbansi*, Rajput, Rautias and Bhiwan landlords: they had become part of the social ethos and they had been, by and large, been borne with. But the class of *thicadars* that flocked into Chotanagpur from 1822, the keen-eyed traders and merchants, land-grabbers and money-lenders, were a far worse class of men; they played a havoc with tribal agrarian institutions and brought about their complete destruction. To this category also belonged the land-hungry peasantry who had migrated into Chotanagpur in the earlier centuries; the traditions of conflict between the Kurmi peasantry and Kol tribals survive and this factor as a cause of the Kol insurrection has still to be explored.

The concept of *diku* has, however, been dynamic, varying in intensity in different regions. But there have been some constants in the concept. If the heads that rolled in the course of the tribal commotions from the Kol



uprising (1830-31) to the communal disturbances in 1965 are a pointer, the tribes have struck with infallible precision at the moneylenders and land-grabbers, who continue to give offence. Of late, the extremist movement in tribal areas has stretched the concept to cover all those who have deprived the tribals of the benefits of the employment and of the fruits of the rich natural and mineral resources of their land. But the concept has been blurred in relation to those who have ceased to annoy (*dik*). There is evidence that the initial bitterness against the Kurmi peasantry which was so manifest in the first half of the 19th century has abated, as they have been accepted as part of the tribal universe.

The last census showed that the non-tribal "aliens" had outnumbered the Scheduled Tribes in the districts that constitute the "Jharkhand".

TABLE I

District	Scheduled Tribe	Scheduled Caste	Residuary Group
Ranchi	61.61	4.55	33.84
Singhbhum	47.31	2.92	49.77
Santal Parganas	38.24	7.56	54.20
Palamau	19.24	25.93	54.83
Hazaribagh	11.30	12.37	76.33
Dhanbad	11.08	15.58	73.34

Source: *Census of India 1961*.

This pattern seems to have been rudely disturbed since 1961 with the large influx of 'outsiders' in the wake of industrialisation of Chotanagpur. The Census of 1971 is likely to reveal further significant modification of this pattern.

### *Agrarian question*

We may now turn to a consideration of the agrarian question before and after independence.

During the period 1910-1935, the agrarian situation remained calm. There was no further breakdown of the *bhuinhari* or *mundari khunthatti* system. The law provided for stringent restrictions on transfer of *khmitkalti* holdings, and the *khuntkatti* tenancy lay in hilly tracts where soil was not fertile and where land did not command a high price. The praedial conditions and uncommuted *rakumats* almost disappeared, and forced labour ceased to exist except in inaccessible pockets. The percentage of landlords' privileged land to total cultivated areas in the district declined from 4.25% to 3.70%, which showed that there was no large-scale encroachment by the landlord on

*raiya*t's lands. This is significant in view of the fact that there was an increase in net cropped areas by 56.3% and that of total rice producing area by 17.8% in the period between the two settlements (Taylor: 87). Correspondingly, the area under the forests diminished by 14.2%. Among the estates, the Chotanagpur Raj managed to increase its area by 35.8% and the number of villages in its *khas* management by 34.6% as a result of the resumption of the Burway State rather than by resorting to violence against the *raiya*t's rights.

A queer result of the provisions for restrictions on transfer of land from a tribals to a non-tribal was the rise of a class of tribal moneylenders, which engaged itself in part-time money lending. Professional money-lenders were active in and around urban areas; in fact, professional moneylenders fought shy of investing in tribal land which they considered a security risk in view of the legal bar on transfer of tribal's holdings. Therefore we find that the share of the professional moneylenders in total land transaction was very small, almost insignificant:

Transfer of land from the tribal to the non-tribal (No. of cases)

	Mortgage (total)	Legal	Illegal	Professional money- lender's share
<i>Mundari Khuntkatti</i>	767	271	496	12.8%
	(1058 acres)			
<i>Bhuhinhari</i>	3707	1075	2632	4.2%

Source: Taylor.

The rise of a new money lending class among tribes, accentuated the strata differentiation in the tribal society and deepened the gulf between the intelligent and affluent sections and those who were improvident and heavily indebted.

Yet another result was that the sources of credit having been choked off, professional moneylenders advanced credit at exorbitant rates. Incidence of transfer of land in contravention of the Act went up).

The rise of a moneylender class among the tribals was the result of the restrictions imposed on the transfer of holdings from tribal to non-tribals under the Act; in the countryside many *raiya*t's practised money-lending as a subsidiary to cultivation; even aboriginal *raiya*t's were found doing this in many instances. In fact the area of *raiya*t's lands in the hands of non-professional money-lenders was considerably more than that in the hands of the professional moneylenders (Taylor: 51 and 52). The *raiya*t as a class were heavily indebted. In the normal village mortgages existed in about 15 per cent of the *raiya*t's holdings. Illegal mortgages greatly outnumbered legal ones. The following table brings out graphically the pattern of the transfer of land:

TABLE 2. Transfer of land under Section 46 of the  
(GNT Act in 1935)

	Sale	Mortgage	Lease
<i>Legal</i>			
1. From non-aboriginals to aboriginals		1,082	153
2. From aboriginals to non-aboriginals		2,091	179
3. From aboriginals to aboriginals	164	1,411	589
4. From non-aboriginals to non-aboriginals	154	7,714	355
<i>Illegal</i>			
1. From non-aboriginals to aboriginals	175	3,431	5,225
2. From aboriginals to non-aboriginals	172	4,524	5,167
3. From aboriginals to aboriginals	305	5,004	18,603
4. From non-aboriginals to non-aboriginals	511	8,303	10,203

Source : Taylor, pp. xxxi-v.

The largest set of transactions, legal and illegal, took place among non-aboriginals and aboriginal groups exclusively. The incidence of the transfer of land from aboriginal to non-aboriginal was only a little higher than that from non-aboriginal to aboriginal. This interesting trend has probably persisted since, though we have no comparable statistics for the later period.

Since independence, among major agrarian changes, could be listed the abolition of the zamindari system or the vesting of intermediaries' interests and establishment of direct relation between the State and the tribal *raiyats*: complete cessation of forced labour and illegal cesses and large-scale settlement of land with the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. The agrarian focus has shifted to the alienation of lands which has assumed 'alarming proportions' in the wake of the industrialisation and urbanisation of tribal tracts and to another related issue, indebtedness, and general economic development.

#### LAND ALIENATION

A measure of land alienation is permissible under the existing laws. Section 46 of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act, which imposes a complete ban on the sale of the right in holding by an aboriginal to a non-aboriginal, allows for temporary alienation in cases of mortgage or lease for a period of five years and *bhugut bandh* mortgage for a period not exceeding seven years. Ordinarily, such transfers of land are converted into adverse possession after twelve years when the transferee acquires the status of settled *raiyat* with occupancy rights. Section 49 also provides for transfer of land for "reasonable and sufficient purposes" to meet charitable, religious, educational, industrial

and developmental needs. While we are not in a position to build up a statistical support for the generally held view that the alienation of land has occurred on a disturbing large scale since independence—such evidence as we have is fragmentary—there are indications that the process of illegal transfers of land noticed during the period following the passage of Chotanagpur Tenancy Act has gathered momentum, particularly around urban industrialised centres. This could be attributed to the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of tribal areas, which inescapably involves a measure of land acquisition in public interest. Increased non-tribal migration to cities from rural and other areas also puts pressure on local tribals' lands. To these new factors may be added social and economic compulsions resulting from the traditional subsistence agriculture and chronically deficit family budget, illiteracy, lack of local leadership and drinking habits.

There has been a noticeable increase in the incidence of the alienation of land in contravention of the Act in favour of other tribals and non-tribals, and both tribal and professional moneylenders have been active in the countryside. In fact many fraudulent devices of unlawfully acquiring possession of tribals' lands have come to light. These are: collusive title suit in civil courts in which a tribal is made to testify to the adverse possession of his land by the transferee; forcible transfer of lands without any registered deed; and transfer through fraudulent manipulation of revenue records to show the existence of non-agricultural holdings to which the Act does not apply. The Dhebar Commission (1961) called for a detailed scrutiny of all pieces of legislation affecting tribals' lands with the ultimate object of 'preventing completely transfers of tribals' land to non-tribals, radical amendment of the agrarian laws to give effect to this; prohibition of all transfers by sale, mortgage or gift in favour of non-tribals, exclusion of the jurisdiction of courts of law; and restoration of the possession of land with or without compensation in case of adverse position with retrospective effect from 26th January 1960.

No rigid view can be taken of the alienation of land in industrial areas. It is time that we look at this problem in its wider perspective. Law has not prevented transfer of land around developing areas. Tribal economy in such pockets is being rapidly commercialised. New opportunities are opening up for a tribal. His image has changed. He is no longer a mere agriculturist; he is also rapidly participating in secondary and tertiary sectors. The new role means new responsibilities. Therefore, consistent with the legal and constitutional provisions for safeguarding tribals' interests and rights, the government should take a hand in regulating the transfer of non-agricultural holdings situated in zones that may be earmarked around industrial areas at favourable prices for tribals. Such an orientation of policy will be both eminently practicable and reasonable. The policy towards the alienation of land in rural areas, however, stands on a different footing, because agriculture is the mainstay of the tribal economy



and any large scale alienation of land will destroy the foundation of tribal life and set the tribal adrift.

#### AMENDMENT OF THE AGRARIAN LAWS

We may take note of some important amendments to the existing agrarian legislation, effected recently, to prevent alienation of land through fraudulent means and to strengthen the existing administrative machinery for the purpose. The Bihar Scheduled Areas Regulation (1969) remedied the existing lacunae under which collusive title suits flourish; the Regulation now authorises the court to ignore admission made under duress and obtain further evidence independently. The Chotanagpur Tenancy Amendment Act (1969) provides for liberalisation of existing restrictions so as to enable an *adivasis* to obtain medium and long-term institutional credit for agricultural development by means of a simple mortgage executed in favour of the cooperative bank of society. Of far-reaching significance has been the amendment of Section 46 of the CNT Act and the corresponding provision of the Santal Pargana Tenancy Act to prevent the fraudulent transfer of land. There are now provisions for an enquiry into transfers of land made in contravention of provisions of the Act, restoration of possession of alienated land belonging to a tribal without compensation; award of compensation or adequate price for unauthorised construction of a building within 30 years from the date of the transfer of the land; provision for its forcible removal and demolition; and payment of adequate compensation or market value of land for land in case of adverse possession.

The Moneylenders' Act has also been modified to provide for a declaration before a prescribed authority of all loans advanced to tribals to bring all kinds of loans within the purview of the Act, to defer the payment of loans up to a period of five years without any interest, and to introduce the system of conciliation boards for the redemption of loans. The jurisdiction of civil courts over the administration of revenue laws, which was the bane of tribal legislation, has been restricted. These have been the most significant amendments to the tribal agrarian laws since their enactment, but legal safeguards are not enough.

By and large, the tribal agrarian legislation, which was once a historical necessity, has served its purpose and helped the tribals to preserve their agrarian systems both *khuntkatti* and *bhuinhari*, relatively intact. This cannot be said of the much larger incidence of the ordinary *raiya* tenancies in possession of the majority of tribal cultivators. The tribals have, however, been able to protect their land and land organisation more successfully than the Scheduled Castes. Three-fourths of the workers among the Scheduled Tribes in Chotanagpur are cultivators; this is larger than the category of cultivators among Scheduled Castes and Residuary groups. The

category of agricultural labour, "those who toil in the field merely for wages in cash or kind without having any kind of right in land" is smallest among the Scheduled Tribes and largest among the Scheduled Castes (54.9%). This is because the Scheduled Tribes continue to depend on land far more than the Scheduled Castes and Residuary groups who claim greater mobility.

TABLE 3. Distribution of Workers

Industrial category of workers		Total population	Scheduled Castes	Scheduled Tribes	Residuary population
Total Workers	P	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	M	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	F	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
I					
As cultivators	P	539	239	781	656
	M	534	241	756	561
	F	547	235	808	576
II					
As agricultural labourers	P	230	549	96	179
	M	199	507	83	155
	F	294	609	108	240
III					
In other services	P	76	97	37	78
	M	89	103	48	91
	F	49	87	26	42

Source: *Census of India 1961*, Vol. IV, Bihar, Part V-A, p. xvii.

The Scheduled Tribes account for a much larger percentage of land holders in higher land holding groups than the Scheduled Castes.

This advantageous placement of tribes (Table 4) as against Scheduled Castes puts in perspective the absence in Chotanagpur of some features of the agrarian situation peculiar to the Bihar plains. In tribal areas there is no corresponding problem of the landless agricultural labour. The right to homestead land has not to be enforced. There are not many share-croppers or leaseholders to be put into the possession of the land they till but do not own though there is scope for consolidation of holdings. Enforcement of ceiling legislation may yield some land to be distributed among weaker sections. But there is an urgent need for evening out the disparities between the richer and poor sections among the tribals themselves.

#### CONCLUSION

Agrarian issues in tribal areas should be settled keeping in view the inter-

dependence of various other weak social groups and the need for evolving an integrated approach to the solution of the economic problems of the region. It is time to ask whether the blanket protection should continue to all sections of tribal community, the advanced and the backward, the elite strata left over by the processes of the state-formation in tribal societies and those who stand at a very low level. It is also time to ask whether economically backward groups among tribes and scheduled castes which are at a much lower level of subsistence do not deserve a larger degree of agrarian security, protection and social assistance. In fact, there is a growing need for assessing the dimensions of the indebtedness and land alienation affecting the weaker groups in tribal society. In the absence of a comprehensive settlement operation—the last took place in the thirties—it is difficult to bring out the pattern and dimension of agrarian changes affecting these groups during the last thirty years.

Secondly, there is need for evolving an integrated policy and programme for the economic development within the protective framework of agrarian legislation, which should be reviewed and strengthened from time to time. Land alienation, indebtedness, slow growth of tribal economy, growing unemployment among the tribal youth are parts of the much larger problems of economic backwardness, which is now assuming a political overtone. It is only with the diversification of tribal economy and the development of agriculture based on the new technology that a solution to agrarian problems of alienation and indebtedness could be found. The agrarian question poses essentially an issue of the modernization of the existing agrarian structure and technique.

## GLOSSRAY

<i>Awabs</i>	Charges levied from raiyats other than rent.
<i>Begari</i>	Forced labour
<i>Bhugut bandha</i>	A kind of mortgage under which the mortgage cultivates the land until the expiration of the period of mortgage (Section 3 (ii) of CNT Act
<i>Chanda</i>	Contribution towards rent payable by Mundari to their headman.
<i>Don</i>	Lowlying paddy land.
<i>Jagir</i>	A term used to describe land or tenure held rent free or on quit rent on condition of performing service.
<i>Kat</i>	A unit of measurement; seed area.
<i>Rakumal</i>	Praedial conditions
<i>Thiccadar</i>	Lessee
<i>Zarpeshigi</i>	Unfructuary mortgage.

TABLE IV. Households engaged in cultivation by size of land in acres (Chotanagpur)

Interest in Land culti- vation	No. of culti- ivating households	Less than	1.0- 2.4	2.5- 4.9	5.0 7.4	7.5 9.9	10.0- 12.4	12.5- 14.9	15.0- 29.9	30.0 49.9	50+	Unspeci- fied
<b>A. Scheduled Castes</b>												
Total	23,355	6,825	8,307	4,844	1,904	573	400	148	264	32	23	31
1.	19,672	5,966	7,145	3,852	1,512	451	334	116	218	31	24	24
2.	1,022	561	313	25	7	5	—	4	—	—	—	4
3.	2,661	298	849	889	367	115	61	82	42	1	4	3
<b>B. Scheduled Tribes</b>												
Total	95,592	7,601	27,342	28,062	15,831	5,537	4,609	1,854	3,731	528	152	288
1.	82,872	7,014	25,694	23,837	13,301	4,499	3,959	1,534	3,186	458	138	258
2.	1,135	283	501	205	65	13	11	1	14	—	—	2
3.	12,585	304	2,117	4,010	2,465	1,022	645	319	591	70	14	28

1. Owned or held from Government.

2. Held from private persons or institutions on payment in money, kind or share.

3. Partly held from Government and partly from private persons or institutions for payment in money, kind or share.

Source: Census of India, 1961, Vol. IV, Part V.A, pp. 297-300.



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# Famine, Scarcity and Economic Development in Tribal Areas

K. SURESH SINGH

Recent studies have stressed the magnitude of the problems created by successive spells of droughts: about 80 per cent of culturable lands depend on rainfall and drought-prone areas, which constitute 69 per cent of total area and 63 per cent of rural population, contribute nearly 60 per cent of total foodgrain production. Development of these areas has, therefore, acquired significance and urgency, because of the instability of agricultural production, low-level rural income and growing rural unemployment and under-employment in the regions. It is also necessary to mitigate the duality that characterises our economy: subsistence tribal economy on the one hand, and the developing and even affluent economies on the other. Inter-regional imbalances are as fruitful sources of social unrest as growing intra-regional disparities.

## *Social characteristics of drought-prone areas*

The most notable feature of drought-prone areas is their spread: out of 330 and odd districts, only 100 districts have assured irrigation facilities. Over the years some of the arid or semi-arid regions have been freed from the jaws of hunger, as permanent irrigation has been extended; some of these areas also now enjoy the highest per capita income and productivity. The remaining districts lie in drought-prone or droughty areas. Some of these are the most backward in point of per capita income, literacy rates and productivity, etc. They also have a larger concentration of such weaker and vulnerable sections of the rural community as the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and the landless agricultural labour. While such backward areas are generally spread all over the country, they are concentrated in the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Uttar Pradesh (Eastern Region), Rajasthan, West Bengal, Andhra and Mysore. From the point of spread and intensity Bihar, with its lowest per capita income, high density of population and sizable concentration of scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, landless labour and crop sharers, tops the list.

A significant element in the population of these areas is the scheduled tribe. Out of 199 districts with a percentage of more than eight per cent of scheduled tribe population, only 19 districts lie in drought-free zone of assured

irrigation, and even here because of the socio-economic handicaps the facilities of assured irrigation have not been extended to the tribes to the necessary extent. Only 46 districts lie in drought-prone and the remaining in the extreme droughty zones. The tribal districts in the north-eastern region have no assured irrigation; the abundant rainfall has not been exploited adequately. Some of the districts lying in the drought-prone zone are very heavily populated by tribals. These are the Lahaul Spiti (Himachal Pradesh), Banswara (Rajasthan), Bandh Phulbari (Orissa), the Narmada Basin districts (Shahdol, Mandla, Jabhua, Balghat, East Nimar, and Dhar) and Satpura in Madhya Pradesh, Dang, Panchmahal (Gujarat) and Ranchi, Palamau (Jharkhand).

It is also significant that in these regions debt bondage survives in varying degrees, the *kamti* system in Palamau, Hazaribagh (Bihar), *sagar* in Southern Rajasthan, *nahim* in Gujarat and *chamaram* in Cuttack (Andhra). This serves to highlight the economic hardships suffered by tribal communities, their exploitation by money-lenders, their lack of reserves and of the capacity to resist the impact of scarcity conditions. There is not only lack of food but also of work and ready cash to buy it at reasonable price.

### *Sociology of drought*

We may describe some of the variables that tend to aggravate the vulnerability of the tribal population to scarcity-famine conditions. First, tribal habitat lies in hilly, inaccessible and undeveloped regions. Secondly, tribal subsistence and monotypic economy is based on an agriculture that is carried on primitive lines. The staple upland crop such as paddy is particularly susceptible to drought. Soil is latentitic. There is shortage of water. This precariously balanced economy is easily upset by natural calamities. Scarcity of food-grain and work causes migration and heavy mortality, breaks up families, reduces purchasing power and accelerates the process of social change. Proselytisation of the communities in distress shows a markedly upward trend in these circumstances.

In the past the tribals fell back upon the reserves of forest-produce, roots and tubers, in times of distress. With forest reservation laws these supplies were severely restricted, and later with the destruction of forests they almost disappeared. At the turn of the century the Ranchi Settlement Report (1910) reported:

There are however other factors to be considered besides the total value of the crops. The aborigines and the low caste Hindus who spring from the same race are remarkable for their physical hardihood. They can therefore subsist on conditions in which members of the more civilised race could not exist. When the crops fail the groups fruits and vegetables of all kinds used are a valuable reserve. With the help of these the remnants of the crops and the assistance given by government they succeed in

riding over periods of stress, which would play havoc with the people of Bengal proper.<sup>2</sup>

The ecological link between tribal man and nature has been greatly weakened with the rapid destruction of the forest since. This has been brought out during the recent famines in Bihar and Rajasthan. No longer does a wild berry remind the tribal that "even when cloud does not squeeze a drop from skies on a parched and thirsty earth, as long as the berry lives not one shall die for dearth".<sup>3</sup> The destruction of forests may or not have affected the rainfall, it has caused soil erosion, a menace to agriculture.

Tribes have suffered acutely under famine conditions. The famine of 1785 which ravaged the hilly and tribal regions has been described by Malet: "Vast quantities of human bones and skulls lay scattered over the country and the wretched remains of the inhabitants reduced to a stage of stupid inactivity and perching themselves on the roofless ruin of their inhabitations seemed rather lost in the contemplation of their misery than inclined to remedy it by labour or exertion."<sup>4</sup> Famine has been a nightmare to a tribal in his isolated habitat; he is reminded of the impending calamity famine by the gregarious flowering of berry or bamboo. A graphic, though allegorical description of the flowering of the bamboo (*mautam* or *thinglam*), a rare phenomenon occurs in a monograph, "*Warimung, Ao-Naga Village*".<sup>5</sup> With the flowering of the bamboo, food supply in the form of bamboo seeds suddenly increases; this also causes an increase in the population of jungle fowls, doric pheasants and rats and omnivorous rodents, which destroy and devour up rice crops.<sup>6</sup>

Famines and scarcities have stimulated political and revivalistic movements. In despair, tribals have turned away from their gods and the spirits who have failed them. The famine of 1770 witnessed the depredations of the Parahiya tribes in Bihar. A succession of severe famines led the homeless and uprooted people to join the Mendicants who after the great famine of 1770 made their raids into Bengal, with the support of starving peasantry; and these culminated in the Sannyasi rebellion of 1772.<sup>7</sup> In 1820 the uprising in Tamar (Chotanagpur) coincided with a famine. The revolutionary, Vasudev Balwant Phadke (1845-83), was stirred by the devastation caused by the terrible famine of 1876-77, which he ascribed to the results of the British domination.<sup>8</sup> The two famines of 1896-97 and 1897-1900, which spread like a leprous contagion throughout Chotanagpur, cast their shadows on the tribal movement led by Birsa Munda: the peoples' sufferings evoked his prophetic outbursts, and his warnings against the impending disaster in which people would die like leaves falling off a tree:<sup>9</sup>

The land is in flames

Like fire it is burning

The land is in the grip of consuming fire



**Like the dry grass**

The fire is spreading over the land like new  
leaves shooting from the trees

The land is carried about like the leaves of the banyan tree  
The land is fluttering about in the wind like the leaves  
of the *peepal* tree.<sup>10</sup>

The famine of 1960 in the Mizo district witnessed the formation of the Mizo National Front (MNF) which sought to organise the famine relief. In the wake of the bitterness and frustration resulting from what was described as inadequate relief, the front turned into a political party. As a matter of policy, the Assam Government encouraged it against the Relief party which was anti-Assam but pro-India.<sup>11</sup>

Famines threw up the messianic leadership of tribal revivalistic movements. Acute hunger, among other things, induced suprasensory perceptions. In 1900, the Bhil area was ravaged by a famine; one Vinda deserted his home after he had lost his all, and started off as a preacher under a new name, Govindgiri; later his movement assumed political overtones before it was quelled in 1912.<sup>12</sup> In 1951, the Sarguja district in Madhya Pradesh witnessed a severe famine. Rajmohini, a Gond woman, lived on roots and tubers and like her people despaired of the traditional pantheon and the ways of propitiating them. Driven by hunger, she went out to collect tubers; exhausted she lay down on a rock. Then she had a vision: a saint appeared and consoled her; he offered to put an end to her people's trouble if they would lead a pious life. She returned, and went on a twenty-one day fast. Her wish was granted; rain fell and prosperity returned to her people. This was the beginning of a reformative movement.<sup>13</sup>

*Development of famine relief policy towards tribals*

It is ironical that famine relief was the only mode of development, for its temporariness in tribal as in other parts of rural areas. Early Famine Commission Reports did not take note of the hardships faced by the tribes during the famines caused by drought. Later, the tribals were reported to have reacted favourably to gratuitous relief, advance of seeds and sale of grain at cheap rate rather than to the provision for employment on relief works. The Famine Commission of 1898, for the first time, recommended measures for extending special relief for the benefit of the tribals. The essence of these recommendations, as the later Famine Commission (1901) observed, was that relief must be taken to the aboriginal people, if they were reluctant to come to it and that gratuitous relief should be liberal. Personnel management should take the place of the automatic methods that govern the administration

of relief under ordinary conditions because "the difficulties vary in proportion to the shyness of the people and great thing is to overcome that shyness".<sup>14</sup> This policy was put to test during the famine of 1899-1900. The tribals were found less shy of and more eager to work on relief works, such as repair of the forest boundaries, construction and repair of new roads, grass cutting and extraction of fibre etc. They were allowed to make free use of forest produce such as honey, edible fruits and leaves. They were employed near their village in preparing fields for summer sawing or in other ways. A successful episode of the famine was the administration of relief to the aborigines of Maleghat taluk in Berar which served to emphasize "the importance of providing suitable work for their tribes and of employing those officials whom they can trust".<sup>15</sup> Experience in the Central Provinces also showed that the tribes looked to the Government and that they had no objection to come on the ordinary relief works; it was even not necessary to make special arrangements for them. However, there were areas such as Khandesh and Panchmahals where because of the failure of the local authorities to realize their responsibilities towards the tribes, the mortality among tribals was very heavy. The difficulties in the Panchmahals were "exceptionally great owing to the character of the people, their dispersion in detached homesteads, the fewness of the village officials and the unwillingness of the outsiders to take service in the district". Moreover the grainshops were few and the grain dealers for fear of spoliation fled to the towns. Even so, the main causes of the failure to provide relief was the "mistake of principles".<sup>16</sup> The commission, therefore, recommended incorporation in the Famine Codes of all provinces in which the aboriginal tribes were found, the following measures of relief:<sup>17</sup>

- (i) Provision for complete programmes of suitable works before the famine begins;
- (ii) Appointment of officers specially qualified to deal with the tribes, wherever they are numerous;
- (iii) Numerous works near the homes of the people; and, as far as possible, congenial works such as grass-cutting and storage, wood-cutting and cutting of fire-lines, mat making, village and forest roads, village tanks, clearing fields of stones and stumps and manual cultivation of the fields;
- (iv) daily payment in all cases; and
- (v) constant village inspection, and liberal gratuitous relief for all tribals who are unable to work.

These provisions were not uniformly adopted in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh with their large tribal population. The Bengal famine code postulated an exclusive programme for tribal labour, special enquiry into their conditions by welfare officers in consultation with tribal leaders, and segregation of tribal labour into separate gangs for purposes of work and grant of loan.

*Economic Development*

Over the years that have followed famine has given way to scarcity in the countryside. Famine was an episode, scarcity is a recurring condition. With the inaccessibility of tribal areas, non-availability of foodgrains, slow development of economy, and pauperization of the tribal masses, scarcity has been an experience of acute and prolonged distress. A solution of scarcity lies in the execution a complex of measures.

Availability of foodgrains at concessional rates through the public distribution system, which has acquitted itself creditably in the past, in remote tribal areas, is the immediate task. The *grain golas* which were conceived as an instrument of the redemption of grain debt and distribution of seeds have been bogged down in arrears. Multipurpose fair price shops, which may cater to tribals' needs, need not repeat their experience, if they are efficiently managed by the government or the cooperative societies.

Provision for employment in lean months, which is the moneylenders' main business period, is another task. This should give the tribal people the purchasing power needed to buy foodgrain and other necessities.

The approach to tribal development so far has been far too diffused and fragmentary. The basic problems of agrarian insecurity, chronic indebtedness and speedy economic development have not been tackled. These should form part of a time-bound programme for immediate implementation.

Development of tribal agrarian legislation has been rather uneven over tribal regions. The principle of inalienability of tribals' land was enshrined in a few legislations enacted towards the close of the last and the beginning of the present century. The Bengal Tenancy Act (1885), the Central Provinces Tenancy Act (1898 and 1920), the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908), the Central Provinces Land Alienation Act (1918) covered a few segments of the Indian tribals. Since the mid-1930s and particularly since Independence, a number of legislations have been enacted, and almost 60 to 75 per cent of the tribals have been brought under their purview. Still loopholes in the existing legislations remain; these should be plugged. The legislation should remain under constant review. There are also a number of ancillary measures which are needed to make the legislations effective. One of them is making land records authentic and bringing them up-to-date, through a single survey (*bujharat*).

Agrarian legislation, no matter however foolproof, is no substitute for speedy economic development. It is time to frame and implement a crash programme for the concentrated development of tribal economy, in the same way as the intensive agricultural development programme in areas of assured irrigation that has yielded spectacular results. The elements of the programme exist; all that is needed is to weave them into a system of 'synergistic packages'.

The key to the transformation of tribal economy lies in the development

of tribal agriculture, which is the mainstay of over 80 per cent of the tribal settled agriculturists. A bare 10 per cent of them practise the *jhuming* cultivation. *Jhuming* is a spontaneous and inescapable response to socio-ecological conditions of a certain kind. The solution here is a *jhuming* controlled and improved by the utilisation of new seeds, nitrogenous fertilisers and pest control.

For the remaining tribal agriculturists, the answer lies in transforming their small holdings into viable units, in the increased productivity of their land. High-yielding varieties of paddy and wheat should do well in low-lying lands, which most tribals excel in reclaiming. Uplands have been found suitable for cotton, maize and pulses. Already maize has replaced upland paddy (*gora*) as the staple crop in Chotanagpur. Intensive development of minor irrigation has good prospects. Some of the agriculturist tribes have a reputation for constructing large diameter wells (Cheros), water reservoirs (Gonds), and terraces complete with bunds (Angamis and Sawaras). The Food Corporation of India is now in a position to take care of the post-harvest technology, i.e., storage, marketing and processing of the produce in tribal areas. The recent experience in Bastar in this regard gives hope.

Self-sufficiency in foodgrains in drought-prone tribal regions is necessary to meet calorie requirements, but this is not enough. Tribal economy can easily lend itself to diversification. Farm forestry (*tangia*) has done well in some areas. Horticulture has unlimited possibilities, as evident from the experience in Orissa, Chotanagpur and Himachal Pradesh. Systematic exploitation of minor forest produce is still another area to be tapped. Suitable marketing could only be arranged by the Government.

Chronic indebtedness is a major constraint on economic development. An experiment in the redemption of longstanding debt is reported to have succeeded in Orissa. The solution here lies in the energetic tackling of this problem through organising a chain of debt redemption boards and setting up a revolving fund to pay off the amount of debt. To ensure that a tribal does not slip back into the clutches of moneylenders the provision for non-productive consumption loan need to be built into the system of cooperative lending in tribal areas.

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Movements and Leadership





# Social Movements Among Tribes of India

L.K. MAHAPATRA

In an earlier paper (1968), this author had proposed a working definition of social movement in these words: 'A social movement occurs when a fairly large number of people, or an otherwise identifiable segment of the population, deliberately band together for collective action in order to alter, reconstitute, reinterpret, restore, protect, supplant or create some portions of their culture or social order, or to better their life-chances by redistributing the power of control in a society.' These movements may continue over a length of time through repeated collective action. This formulation may be adopted here for the purpose of the present paper with a few clarifications. Firstly, the objectives or goals of a social movement need not be fully articulate or explicit, or need not be constant, as the movement unfolds its potentialities, or may not be shared equally by all who participate in the movement. For example, the perception of the goals or objectives may significantly differ as between the mass and the leaders. It need not be mentioned that we are here not concerned with the personal motives of the individual participants. Secondly, the nature of the banding together for collective action may have a range of variations, from the common shared sentiments and preparedness for collective action, or a general susceptibility to collective action, with little planning of rational reactions to foreseeable consequences of their action, to coordinated aims, well-organized action-programmes and institutionalized behaviour-pattern, division of labour and authority at various levels etc. etc. Thirdly, among the tribes, partly because of their peculiar position in the social structure of a region, when they are not in the majority or dominant, partly because their socio-cultural life is rather integrated, and partly also because not many avenues for organized action are available to them, any social movement arising will tend to serve several interests at the same time. In other words, an apparently religious movement may have economic, status mobility or even political implications, if not objectives, explicitly formulated by the participants. Fourthly, a social movement may lead to violent action, apportion to authority or to the alleged dispossessors, but it is not to be confused with a rebellion or revolt. A social movement, in contrast to a revolt, rather turns inward and avoids a direct

conformation with the objects or forces which may ultimately hinder its progress. A rebellion or revolt, moreover, has clear, specific goals, of which all the participants are aware, whereas in a social movement all the goals are not explicit or specific. Further, the participants and even the leaders in a social movement may be unaware of some or major goals.

In the present paper the nature and variety of social movements among the tribes of India and some of their implications for pan-Indian tribal unity will be explored.

#### TYPES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

We need not go into all the detailed typologies of social movements which have been already set out in the earlier papers (Mahapatra, 1968). However, we have still to use some of these and to supplement our efforts further.

On basis of differential orientation to the existing culture or society, social movements may be 'reactionary', 'conservative', 'revisionary' or 'revolutionary'. When they advance aims seeking to bring back 'the good old days', these are called reactionary by Cameron, but are generally known as 'revivalistic' (cf. Linton). Conservative movements seek to perpetuate the status quo and are organized to obstruct the current changes. Linton would call these 'perpetuative' movements. For Linton, both "revivalistic and perpetuative movements are subsumed under "nativistic" movement, which is 'any conscious organized attempt on the part of a society's members to revive or perpetuate selected aspects of their culture'. Revisionary movements are those in which specific changes are desired, efforts are made to realize that by modifying or supplanting the existing customs, but the existing structure as a whole is not to be replaced. "All the movements organized for the 'improvement' or 'purification' of the culture or social order by eliminating evil or low customs, beliefs, or institutions, typically, social mobility movements, can be characterized 'revisionary'." (Mahapatra, 1968). This category may be quite appropriately applied to the social mobility movements among the lower castes in the Hindu society, but not so in the case of a tribal group seeking to achieve a particular status in the local Hindu hierarchy. Here, it involves a significant discontinuity in social foliation and cultural orientation, as is characteristic of a 'revolutionary' movement. In revolutionary movements the aims are to replace the whole of a culture or social order with another more suitable, adequate or progressive. But this is not to say that actually everything in the contents is replaced, and historically, this has never been the case with any revolution. Moreover, a social movement, objectively and culture-historically considered, may be revolutionary, but may be 'visualized' as purely 'revivalistic' by the participants. The case in point is the Sarna Dharam (Sacred Grove Religion) movement among the Santal of Bihar and Orissa.

Smelser's distinctions between 'norm-oriented' and 'value-oriented' movements as also his category of 'general' social movements have been found to be very helpful. In norm-oriented movements specific norms or regulatory principles are to be maintained or certain obstacles in their functioning are to be removed. Value-oriented movements are concerned with values of "the most general statements of legitimate ends which guide social action", with a world view or ideology. What he calls general social movements possess "neither sufficiently crystallized beliefs nor sufficient degree of mobilization to fill in the category of collective outbursts. Rather they provide a backdrop from which many specific norm-oriented movements emanate" (Smelser). The movements for Harijan Uplift and the Welfare of Tribes are illustrations of such general movements, as the Peasant or Labour Movements were.

That 'value-oriented' movements can be a very wide category is known from Smelser's examples ranging from Marxism-Leninism, Nazism, religious and secular beliefs associated with cults of withdrawal, beliefs associated with 'nativistic' or 'revitalization' movements, millenarian or messianic cults to nationalistic beliefs. This may appear to be too wide a category. But when one examines a particular social movement in all its aspects or phases of development, one is struck with the scholastic irreverence with which the movement takes the character of this or that type, apparently arbitrarily. The "nativistic" and "revolutionary" elements may easily be combined in the same movement. Hence, a broad characterization as 'norm-oriented' versus 'value-oriented' is quite in order, especially when Smelser calls our attention to the nature of many "social movements" or "reform movements" as norm-oriented movements.

Besides, these topologies, others were also examined in the earlier paper; for example, religious or secular, political or non-political, emulation-reinforcing or solidarity-reinforcing movements. However, adequate justice was not done to the important criterion of leadership as a basis of typology, except indirectly bringing it in for the distinction between exogenous and indigenous movements. From another angle, we may consider whether the leaders are from among the traditional elite or out of the emerging intelligentsia. The intelligentsia are to be conceived as the interpreters of the foreign, impinging culture, with which they have already developed some familiarity, much ahead of the masses. This foreign culture in India is not merely the Western civilization in India, but the whole framework of a social order where one has to understand the ways of the courts, the bureaucracy, the political parties and of several distant groups of people for a common cause. In a sense, the traditional elite had occupied the position of the intelligent with regard to the dominant Hindu and in some areas, also the dominant Muslim culture in the past. On another footing is the category of charismatic leaders, which may be considered along with their special development, the

messianic or chiliasmic leaders. A charismatic leader is supposed to attract followers because of charisma, his personal, extra-ordinary qualities and allegedly miraculous successes. A messiah or a leader of a chiliasmic movement is a charismatic leader with prophetic powers of inducing assurance in the minds of his people, because of a certain peculiar belief-system in his culture. There is a general belief among some peoples that a messiah will arise to bring back the good old days, the proverbial Golden Age, secure justice, or drive away the oppressors. A charismatic leader under divine inspiration can only under this circumstance initiate chiliasm, which is, in the words of Professor Muehlmann, 'the collective preparedness to start anew towards securing or materializing the deeply craved-for paradise-like happy life on earth'. Fuchs has failed to appreciate this and has therefore characterised almost any movement as "messianic" and mere charismatic leaders as messiahs (1965).

#### BRIEF SURVEY OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN INDIA

In is obvious that there was very little known about ancient social movements, and most probably most had their origins in religious upheavals, like the Buddhism and Jainism in ancient India, Vaishnavism of Bengal converting the Meithei people of Manipur or the Bhumij of Bengal, Vaishnavism of Assam converting the Nokte Naga, the Kachari, the Miri and the Moran, Vaishnavism in Orissa giving the push to a value-oriented social movement among the Bathudi and perhaps others. The Mahima or Alekh Dharma, a new cult going back to the decaying Buddhism in Orissa, affecting the Kond and other tribes, and the Vairashaivism of South India penetrating to the tribal recesses upto Orissa borders. Shri Chaitanya is reputed to have traversed the hilly tract, known as Jharkhand, to the west of coastal Orissa and Bengal, preaching his Vaishnavism. We know from the history of Manipur, or the recent practice in North Bengal in British days (Roy Burman), that usually the Raja or headmen, the traditional elite, got themselves converted and the whole populace followed the example to a large extent, giving effect to a large-scale religious movement, re-orienting their way of life. Quite possibly this also happened in the past, especially among some sections of the Gond in Central India and of the Bhuiyan, Kond and other groups in Orissa. But more effective, though much less spectacular, were the subtle ways in which the ruling elite among the Bhumij, the Gond, the Munda (Sinha 1962), probably also among the Bhil, secured the Kshatriya status in Hindu society, imbuing their clansmen or peoples with the same ambition, which resulted in social mobility movements.

When the Britishers came and conquered the whole country, they came to clash with the tribal groups as they sought to stop raiding, feuding, head-hunting, human sacrifice or slavery in north-eastern India and Orissa,



or as they intervened in support of the allegedly harassed, but actually the oppressing landlords, middlemen, moneylenders, police or forest officials, or princely chiefs in Bihar, Bengal, Orissa, Bastar, former Madras Agencies and Central Indian States and possibly in Rajasthan also. Similar revolts also took place in Hyderabad ex-State as late as 1940, among the Gond and in Orissa in the 1940s against their obnoxious Pana neighbours and usurious, landgrabbing plainmen among the Saora. The Britishers had wisely left the turbulent Naga, the organized Khasi, the Garo, the Mizo, the Kuki and other hill tribes of Assam to be administered benevolently, more or less following the tenets of indirect rule. Similarly, the Ho or Kolha of Kolhan in Singhbhum or the Santal in the Santal Parganas were under special administration.

Thus subdued and disarmed, and to a certain extent, appeased, the tribes realized that they could not successfully fight against the British or those they support through open revolt. When there was a later phase of oppression, rack-renting etc. among the Santal back to their golden age of the past, to their original religion of worshipping one God, by cleansing themselves of their sins. The leader later on promised that their lost lands would be recovered through God. Fuchs suspects Christian influence in the earlier phase of this movement known as Kherwar or Sapha Hor (Clean Men). It gradually took a more political turn, by planning a revolt and a driving away of the non-Kherwar (non-Santal aliens) out of their habitat. Later on Hindu influences were dominant with the induction of Rama and ban on eating pigs and fowls (Fuchs, 1965: 46-59).

Under similar circumstances various Bhagat movements were current among the Oraon of Chotanagpur, first reported about 1895, in order to install their Kurukh Dharam in its pure form by worshipping the one God. The faith in a Messiah was already planted by the Missionaries among the Oraon and the Munda, and the Messiah was to deliver the people not only from the hold of the evil spirits but also from the exploitation and oppression then going on. The claim that the followers of Bhagat movement would secure a higher status than that of the Christians and equal to the Hindus had its special appeal and imprinted the character of the movements. Revivalism to the extent of going back to shifting cultivation in order to avoid yoking the sacred cows and bullocks, and the higher Hindu tenets of adjuring animal food, liquor, blood sacrifices, or the need for upholding self-respect and status by refusing to serve as labourers to other castes and tribes—were emphasized by various prophets. Especially influential were Tana Bhagats during the First World War, who wanted to stop dancing and singing and would adjure all things red, the colour of blood. Though Hindu elements predominated in the teaching, the prayer meetings and the belief in a Messiah and emphasis on one God were of Christian derivation, to which their idiosyncratic flavour—like the taboos on things red or brandishing spears in order to drive away evil spirits from their land, were

added. The movements threatened to develop into a campaign of hatred and revolt against the outsiders, oppressors and the christians, missionaries and converts. The religious movement turned to be more political and violent towards its end. There were other Bhagat movements of greater Hindu imprint and by adhering to Hindu gurus (Fuchs, 1965: 35-46).

The Munda had similarly a powerful charismatic leader, who claimed to be the *Dharti Aba* (Father of the World) or even Bhagwan (the supreme God) and preached Hindu ideals of ritual purity, morality and asceticism and against the worship of priests. He even promised the deliverance of his followers though the deluge and a Munda raj, driving away the oppressors, landlords as well as the British. Thus politics and violence gradually took the movement over and led to a violent clash. This move-ment died ultimately down to a small endogamous sect. (Fuchs: 22-34).

Thus, we find charismatic leaders arising. Under Christian and Hindu inspiration, among the Munda, the Oraon and the Santal, initiating social movements of chiliastic or messianic kind, primarily aimed at increasing their ethnic unity, purity and prosperity through a reformed religion. But always the movements came in their later phase to be politically oriented against the outsiders who exploited and dispossessed, and often ending in a violent clash with the British power. Later on, we find, as the National Congress carried its campaigns into the interior of India, the participants of these originally non-national movements taking part in anti-British demonstrations, as did the Oraon, the Santal, the Bhumij and a few others.

In north-eastern India, among the hill tribes there was little ground to complain against the mighty, but benevolent British. Christianity, patronized by the British, brought education, better health, job opportunities and general economic development and there was no class of exploiters unlike in Chotanagpur. If records available are to be trusted, there were no such frequent messianic or chiliastic movements, except among the Kacha Naga, whose enemies were both the British as well as the Kuki intruders, their more traditional enemies, against whom the british did not help the Kacha Naga. The circumstances of the emergence of this movement are not clear, though Fuchs refers to the essentially Naga ingredients with Christian and Hindu embellishments. The apotheosis of the two charismatic leaders and their promise of the Kacha Naga Raj by eliminating the Kuki, remind us of Birsā Munda. But this movement was also allegedly against conversion of the Naga into Christianity, perpetrating human sacrifices, which practice is as non-Hindu as non-Christian. It appears to be quite understandable that even among the Khasi and the Lushai converts to the Welsh Presbyterianism, which is quite susceptible of messianic developments, there was no need for social movement of any importance (a minor one occurred among the Lushai by 'rogues and hypocrites'). (Fuchs; 1965: 144-45). There are reasons to believe that social mobility movements went on unabated among plains tribes of

Assam, among the Kachari, Pabha, Miri, etc., though no adequate records are available.

In Madhya Pradesh among the Gond in the 1930s there were movements by Gond charismatic leaders, claiming the Kshatriya status of the Gond and seeking to purify the religion and social institutions in tune with the practices of high Hindu status. Elwin speaks of "Kshatriya Surajwanshi Maha Sabha" of Seoni and Mandla. In the 1940s a Hindu holy man initiated a new religious movement, which ran into some excesses in exercising evil spirits, but ended up as a routinized legal association in the 1950s. Another charismatic leader, a Gond lady, was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, to wean the Gond and other local tribal people away from liquor and medicinemen into a more ethical Hinduized religion, and her movement developed into "Bapu Dharm Sabha Adivasi Mandal". (Mahapatra and Tripathy, 1956; Majumdar, Fuchs, 1965: 88-92). Therefore, the Gonds largely Hinduized with the status of a clean caste, a section already becoming equivalent to Kshatriya (Sinha, 1962), and with substantial landholding in Orissa and Madhya Pradesh, has not developed and other social movements except those which served their status mobility.

In Western India often Hindu Sadhu or holy men have initiated religious and mobility movements among the Bhil and Gamit (Mahapatra and Tripathy, 1956; Fuchs, 1965: 216, 238-52) and other sections of the Bhil tribe. The messianic 10th incarnation of the Hindu God-head, Kalki, has been at the heart of a popular new cult with a sacred seat or institutionalized cult-centre under the charge of the Brahman priests. The great Bhil people, associated with Hindu kingdoms from time immemorial and attracted to Hindu religion and society, have sought through their movements to adopt a purer Hindu life away from their tribal past.

As we have no information on the religious or other social movements among South Indian tribes of Madras, Mysore and Kerala in the recent past, we may take into consideration Mandelbaum's note on the socio-religious schisms in a Kota village on the Nilgiri hills. The Kota artisans and musicians were in the 1940s divided into two camps, the one of the old-timers, conservative traditionalists and the other of the progressivists, younger members with greater familiarity with modern ways of the towns. The modernists would like to replace the old religion, morals dress, haircutting, etc., with a Hindu way of life, more or less. If this is symptomatic of all the Kota villages, we may speak of a social movement raging there with the aim to raise the status of the Kota in the eyes of the Hindu neighbours; perhaps they hope to beat their rivals, the agriculturist Badaga, in their status race!

The preoccupation of the semi-Hinduized tribes with status mobility movements can be paralleled with the social mobility movements among lower castes, as Sinha's compilation amply proves (Sinha ed., 1959). Some

political social workers as among the Kharia (Mahapatra 1968) have also contributed to such movements.

These social mobility movements were more organized, having often legal and bureaucratic paraphernalia, as among the Bhumij, the Kisan, the Kond, the Juang and a number of other tribes in eastern, central and western India—than anything in the past. In this routinization and institutionalization they have been influenced by the caste associations. Like the scattered tribesmen in various political units, towns or villages, the members of a caste also had the problem to build a unified group and to fight for a higher social status.

When Independence came, the Scheduled tribes, whether they were Hinduized, Christianized or not, were granted certain economic, legal, educational, political and administrative privileges, which gradually made it possible for them to hold their own against the rivalry of their neighbouring groups. They could claim also higher status because of new acquisitions in education, political power, economic benefits, jobs, etc., irrespective of their following the Hindu or Christian social models. Even though the traditional elite may be powerful, the newly emerging intelligentsia in the various hitherto backward tribes, became the real repository of power. There is premium on education, on the capacity to manipulate the organs of power to one's advantage. In this neither charisma nor traditional status will help. Along with this shift in power from the traditional and charismatic leadership to the intelligentsia, goes also the shift in the scale of operation and in the level of the aspirations. Social mobility movements, religious movements or conversion were patently producing endogamous vivisection an ethnic group, though they aimed at unity and solidarity. The alternative road to higher status, now available since Independence, is the more reliable, guarantees comprehensive benefits and without any sacrifice, which the mobility movements entailed. This political road can only be taken with solidarity with other tribal groups as "Adivasi", the very term suggesting an ideological base. Hence the need for going beyond the particular tribal groups, by forging a stable unity through ideologically conceived common religion, culture and political association and by campaigning for a homeland, like a federating State of Jharkhand. It is Steel city of Jamshedpur, there was a cultural re-awakening. The invention of a script and establishment of a revitalized religion, Sarna Dharam, emphasizing old Santal food habits and dancing, etc., revolting to Hindu neighbours, but elevated with the high morality of world religions, and the inauguration of a Socio-educational and Cultural Movement (Mahapatra, 1968) by a member of the intelligentsia turned a charismatic leader, just supplied the infrastructure for the political grouping. As the movement developed, the religion, script, culture and educational system, etc. were claimed to be the common heritage of all the tribes of Chotanagpur and Orissa region. That the political leader, Jaipal Singh, another intelligentsia had to assume charismatic proportion fits in the



matrix of this region's belief-system very well. That the movement for founding a State of the Adivasi is still powerful has been obvious from the recent history of the emergence of several Jharkhand parties in Bihar replacing the older leadership, which had become lukewarm towards the campaign.

A similar process, on another level, has taken place among some other tribal groups, but with importation of political workers of the Communist brand. The former shifting cultivators, Warli of Western India, have since 1946 become part and parcel of the region's peasant movement. In Koraput district, the local Kond have joined a rather localized tribal organization run by Communist workers, which claims solidarity with all the Adivasi and all the proletariat of the world. In recent years, the Saora and other tribal groups in Visakhapatnam Agency of Andhra Pradesh have taken up arms under extreme Communist leadership to fight against their exploiting landlords, middlemen and dispossessors of their land. Similar move was already reported earlier among Naxalbari tribesmen. There is, therefore, a current trend of initiating movements among tribes seeking to tie their fate not only with other tribes, but with other have-nots of India, and even with the world's proletariat. It is too early to speculate on the impact of this movement on other tribes. Though ideologically completely different, the *Gramdan* movement is contributing in the some direction.

#### SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

We have noted in the he above survey how leadership in the movements has shifted, how routinization and institutionalization have set in as the movement developed, how the tribes have reacted differentially to the impinging Hindu and later on Christian religion, imperial rule and lastly Independence, through various types of movements, and how messianic movements were a special development in a specific area among the Munda, Oraon and Santal peoples consequent upon the introduction of Christianity.

We can note only two things here at the end to help us in further thinking on the subject. First, we do not find any significant social movement, religious, status mobility or political, among the numerically small, migratory tribes, like the Birhor, Korwa, Pahira, the hill Kharia, or the shifting cultivators like the Hill Maria, the Hill Saora of the more primitive Kond. That there is always a 'charismatic milieu' in these societies is not difficult to prove, as the example given by Jay for the Hill Maria (Fuchs, 1965: 92-3) shows. The shifting cultivator hill Bhuiyan have only recently banded together with their agriculturist kinsmen in the valleys and nearby mines in a pan-Bhuiyan association for coping with the problems of modern life and for checking some evil customs under the guidance of non-traditional leaders.

No less backward or primitive tribes of NEFA have, however, taken

other cues from their neighbours. We find among the tribes of NEFA, especially among its young, educated intelligentsia, an allegedly spontaneous growth of a movement for conversion to Christianity and to adopt English as their language of education and administration. We may say, education and emulation of the Christian tribal administrator and educators might have set them and their elders on this path. Nagaland, their next-door neighbour, obviously is the model. The Naga tribes also had similar inter-ethnic differences of language, culture and social structure, but have forged ahead in spite of these. To the extent the Naga, the Garo, the Khasi and other hill tribes forge a link among themselves and with the rest of tribal population of India, there is the prospect of a Pan-Indian tribal movements, however heterogeneous or tenuous it may be. Some of the tribes or sections who have gone far out with the Hindu or Muslim society, may fall out, but not in all cases. Others may switch on their movement away from Hindu society towards the tribal groups again, by changing leadership and even the designation of their organization, as the Bhumij reluctantly added "Adivasi" to their original 'Bhumij Kshatriya Association'. Similarly, the Manipuri Meitei, since long Hinduized, have recently started a revivalistic movement 'Meitei Marap', harking back to their tribal past. As education expands, as the hold of the intelligentsia extends, as the political power grips the imagination of the masses, and if the political and other privileges are withdrawn in the near future, there is even a greater possibility of increasing the forces of solidarity of tribesmen *qua* tribesmen in India of the future (Cf. Mahapatra, 1969).

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# Tribal Solidarity Movements in India: A Review

SURAJIT SINHA

## I. OBSERVATIONS

The following facts about tribal India are fairly well known:

(a) There have been a series of ethnic (tribal) rebellions during the early days of the British Rules in the 18th and 19th centuries; Sardar Larai (1885) and Birsa movement (1895-1900) among the Munda; Ganganarain *Hangama* (1832) among the Bhumij; Kol Rebellion (1832); Santal Rebellion (1857-58); Rebellion of the Kacha Nagas (1880s) and so on. (For details see Fuchs 1965 and *Man in India*; rebellion Number, 1945).

(b) Following these tribal rebellion, or sometimes without such precedence, there have been a series of reform movements emulating the cultural pattern of the higher Hindu castes: Bhagat movement among the Oraon, Vaishnavite reform movement among the Bhumij, social mobility movement among the Bhumij for Rajput recognition, Kherwar movement among the Santal and so on.

(c) Emergence of inter-tribal political associations and movements for recognition as 'tribe' states within the Indian Union in the post-Independence period: Jharkhand movement among the tribes of Chotanagpur and Orissa, Hill States movement in the Assam Hills, Adisthan Movement among the Bhil and so on.

(d) Violent Secessionist movements among tribes located near the international frontier: Nagaland movement, Mizo National Front Movement and so on.

(e) Pockets of violent political movements in the tribal belt linked with the general problem of agrarian unrest and Communist movement: Hajng unrest (1944), Naxalbari movement (1967), Girijan Rebellion at Srikakulam (1968-69), Birsa Dal movement in Ranchi (1968-69).

## II. PROBLEMS OF DEFINITION

In this paper I am not concerned with all categories of social movements among the tribes. For a general paper on all categories of social movements one may refer to Mahapatra's paper on "Social movements among Tribes



in Eastern India with Special Reference to Orissa" (Mahapatra:1968). I shall be dealing here only with self-conscious socio-political movement aimed at asserting political solidarity of a tribe or of a group of tribes *vis-a-vis* the non-tribals. Here I shall not go in for a discussion about how to distinguish tribe from caste/peasant (see Sinha 1965). We may accept the groups listed in the category of Scheduled Tribes in latest notification of the Government of India and examine of range of political solidarity movements exhibited by them. Although my focus will be on political solidarity I shall be concerned, as an anthropologist, with exploring the social and cultural context of these movements.

### III. ARRANGING THE SOLIDARITY SITUATION IN A SERIES IN SPACE

The political 'solidarity situations' and movements among the tribes of India may be arranged in a series in space from the least integrated to those who have merged with the general level of the regional Hindu peasantry as follows:

(a) The isolated or hitherto isolated tribes who accept their social, cultural and political independence as a matter of course and are therefore not involved in any self-conscious movements to assert solidarity; the tribes of Andaman and Nicobar Islands belong, or belonging until very recently, to this category. Many of the tribes of pre-Independence NEFA or of relatively remote regions of the Nagaland also belonged to this category.

(b) Tribal blocks located near the international frontier self-consciously seeking political cessation from the Indian Union: Naga National Front movement, Mizo National Front movement, etc. Unlike the isolated tribes of the first category here the self-conscious movements are led by an educated elite who are fully aware of the political entity of Indian Union.

(c) Tribal blocks occurring as sizable encysted zones going in for demands for 'tribal state' within the India Union: Jharkhand movement among the Chotanagpur tribes, Adisthan demand among the Bhil, APHLC movement among the tribes of the Garo and the Khasi Hills.

(d) Scattered isolated tribal pockets asserting rights as political interest groups as 'Scheduled Tribes': the Santal and the Kora of West Bengal.

(e) Tribes who are too far Hinduized to be effectively involved in solidarity movements in the company of non-Hinduized tribes: the Bhumij of Purulia and Singhbhum.

Besides the above linear spatial and cultural ecological series roughly following the tribe-caste/tribe-peasant continuum we may also identify special solidarity situations such as:

(a) Small encysted tribal groups like the hunting and gathering Pahira living at the foot of the Dalma Hills in Singhbhum District who are virtually withdrawn from any involvement in inter-tribal solidarity movement although

they participate in the caste based economy in the region. The Birhor of Ranchi and Hazaribagh district are similarly isolated from the inter-tribal Jharkhand movement.

(b) In an isolated tribal dominated region, integrated under a Rajput chieftancy the tribals may make a common cause with the Hindu chief. Ganganarian *Hangama* among the Bhumij in 1832 (Fuchs 1965: 62-67) and the support of the Muria and the Maria for the deposed Maharaja of Bastar (1958-59) may be cited as examples.

#### IV. TIME PERSPECTIVE

Now that we have placed the tribal solidarity situations typologically in a spatial series mainly in terms of ecological and socio-cultural isolation from the Hindu peasantry let us look into the movements in a perspective of time, as phases of confrontation between the tribal and the non-tribal world.

##### (a) *Pre-British, pre-Industrial, pre-market phase*

Professor Ray, in his introductory address to the Seminar (1969), has already cleared the ground from a great deal of confusion regarding the category 'tribe' as seen through history. He has fruitfully reminded us of the general category *Jana* and of the special categories *atavika rajyas* (forest regions) and *pratyanta desas* (frontier regions). It appears that the so-called aboriginal tribes passed through a phase of violent confrontation with the Aryans which initially resulted in their partial absorption with the dominant immigrants at the lowest social level and partial retreat from the plains into the relatively inaccessible hilly and forest tracts. In this process of retreat, it is quite possible that many of the ancient tribes passed through a phase of devolution or secondary primitivization from a higher socio-cultural level.

It appears that the Aryans evolved stable regional economic and social units in which the relatively isolated and backward ethnic groups ('tribes') also found a place in terms of corporate social status and economic and political functions. It may safely be assumed that such a situation existed at least at the time of Buddha. Bose has described this process as 'Hindu method of Tribal Absorption' (Bose 1941). According to him, this process, while assuring cultural autonomy to the newly integrated tribes, ultimately released a cultural process by which the dominated and lowly ranked tribes gradually emulated the cultural pattern of the dominant Hindu upper castes. Often, this process of integration was brought about regional capsules under the super-structure of small states often headed by tribal derived Rajput chiefs (Sinha 1962).

There is an underlying assumption in Bose's proposition that, on the whole, this process of slow integration provided the tribes with sufficient

economic, social and cultural security as not to generate large-scale rebellion. My own impression is that in spite of this general pattern of harmony the tribals are not without an awareness that they were looked down upon and given a low status. It is not for nothing that the Kharia (Savar) of Purulia have a myth that the Brahmans stole the sacred thread from them and, therefore, although they ate beef and accepted food from some of the lowest Hindu castes they do not do so from the Brahmans (Banerjee 1959).

Navalakha has spoken about the residual resentment of the Bhils of Banswara about the dominating Rajputs although they have given up the path of open rebellion (Navalakha 1959).

Stating more generally, it appears that although in course of time, the pattern of interaction between the advanced peasants and the residual tribes were guided by a notion of 'inter-cultural tolerance' and an 'indifference' about converting the tribals to the so-called Aryan mode, it cannot be said that a section of the tribals did not retain a residual fear and resentment about the low status assigned to them by the powerful encroaching Aryans. In contemporary situation similar resentment is reflected in the concept of *Diku* ('foreigners', 'outgroup') among the tribes of Chotanagpur (Sinha, Sen and Panchbhair 1968) and in the resentment of the *Chhotolok* (lok) castes *vis-a-vis* the *Bhadralok* ('civilized', 'upper') castes in rural West Bengal (Sinha and Bhattacharjee 1969).

(b) *Early (1776-1857) and late (1858-1947) periods of  
British Administration*

While the Aryans allowed the residual tribals to pursue their own ways of life in the relatively inaccessible terrain and to gradually evolve patterns of regional synthesis the British became immediately concerned with establishing a uniform network of law and order throughout their new empire. It is well known that the illiterate and economically backward tribals failed to take advantage of the British introduced courts and lost large portions of their land to the non-tribals in various regions. Opening of new channels of communication increased the volume of non-tribal immigration into these tempo of immigration. Thus the confrontation between the indigenous tribals and the immigrants attained a massive proportion without allowing enough time to evolve a regional cultural synthesis and inter-ethnic moral order. Under such a situation of economic, social and cultural threat a series of tribal revolts took place during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

In response to these tribal rebellions the British government, after an initial phase of repression, initiated a series of protective legislations and administrative devices in favour of the groups officially labelled as 'tribals' and very soon 'tribe' as a social category distinct from the Hindu and the

Moslem peasantry crystallized. In the process, while certain areas like Chotanagpur, central Provinces (now Madhya Pradesh) etc. continued to have interaction with the non-tribal sections of Indian population, other areas, such as NEFA, Naga Hills District etc. were virtually cordoned off from contact with Indian civilization.

The spread of the British administration into these areas was closely followed by the coming of the European missionaries. In general the missionaries harped on the social and cultural difference between the Hindus and the tribals and also pointed out that the Hindu civilization was essentially backward, superstition-ridden and oppressive in contrast to the benevolent Christian (European) civilization. Europeans thus appeared as a reference group for the new tribal elite. This was also the period when literacy and formal education spread among a section of the tribals, some of whom moved into jobs as clerks, officers, teachers and so on. Thus a minority of educated elite emerged.

This schism between the so-called and the non-tribal Hindus was further accentuated by the creation of special tribe constituencies in terms of the India Act of 1935 which laid down the historical basis for forming various tribal associates like Jharkhand Party (for details see Sen 1969 and Vidyarthi 1969).

It should be mentioned here that along with development of separatism sponsored by the new tribal elite, this period was also marked by a faster trend towards incorporation of linguistic and cultural traits of the Hindu peasantry in the relatively less isolated regions. This is amply recorded in the successive census reports in terms of progressive Hinduization and linguistic acculturation.

### *(c) Period Since Independence (1947 and after)*

While the British policy was mainly that of consolidation of tribal separatism along with limited welfare measures within the administrative framework of the British Government of India, Independent India professed a policy of phased integration of tribes in the body-politic of India along with massive welfare activities. The rural category of 'tribe' (Adim Jati/ Adivasi/ Vanya Jati) and 'tribal constituency' and special protective measures for the tribes were retained.

Between 1947 and 1969 the levels of literacy and education and industrial development in the tribal areas have gone up. Along with these one also finds greater involvement of the growing tribal middle class and elite in parochial solidarity movements. These movements, however, are not usually in the form of messianic or revitalization movements. They are often based on formation of new tribal political associations or parties. While these parties



have widely participated in the national process of democracy through involvement in provincial and national elections, there also have been occasional outbursts of violence. Recently there is also a trend towards factionalism, along tribal lines, in these new political associations. In some cases the tribals or some of the tribal dominated parties have developed links with other provincial and All India parties.

One interesting feature of the post-Independence phase is that the work of the European missionaries among the tribals has increasingly been looked upon with suspicions and in many areas further conversion of the tribals to Christianity has stopped. On the other hand, unlike the traditional mode of indifference about religious conversion some of the new Hindu socio-religious organizations have taken active interest in formal conversion of the tribals towards Hinduism.

#### V. DIFFERENT MODELS FOR LOOKING AT THE SITUATION

##### 1. *Sub-nationalism*

Bose (1967) characterizes the recent tribal political movements and emerging political associations as falling in the general category of 'sub-nationalism' along with political associations based on religion, language and caste. According to Bose, sub-nationalism is typically generated in economically backward communities of an emerging nation. The general assumption is that these movements are essentially based on the economic and political interest of the rising elite who wish to monopolize their dominance over a bounded region and mobilize the relatively passive tribal and peasant masses to fulfil their limited class aspirations.

##### 2. *Infra-nationalism and Sub-nationalism*

in contrast to Bose, Roy Burman (1969) makes a distinction between two kinds of elite based movements among the tribes. In one kind, 'infra-nationalism', the tribes are involved in a progressive movement, in a phase of expansion from a primitive stage of 'tribalism' towards 'nationalism'. At this phase of infra-national agglomerates of tribes are in search for identity at a higher level of integration than tribalism.

In contrast to this expansive and progressive phase of infra-nationalism, sub-nationalism is essentially a product of social disorganization where already acculturated elites of a tribe become involved in contra-acculturative contraction of relationship. According to Roy Burman, one can mark the interplay of these two 'analytically distinct' series of phases in the actual solidarity situations of the different tribes.

### 3. *Rank Concession Syndrome*

Orans (1965) makes some very useful generalizations about social movements among encysted tribes, that is, tribes surrounded on all sides by dominant Hindu groups. Under such situations the tribal groups 'concede rank' to the dominant Hindus but resent their low position and desire to attain high position. The pattern of socio-cultural activities for attaining higher rank is guided essentially by the broad nature of 'rank path'. If the rank path is essentially economic then the tribes, particularly their upper strata, move in the direction of emulation of the pattern of culture of the dominant Hindus (Note: This process is comparable to Srinivas' concept of Sanskritization and Bose's 'Hindu model of tribal absorption'). If the rank path through economic improvement is essentially blocked and the opening for status is perceived mainly in the sphere of political consolidation, whether in the form of rebellion or that of parliamentary democracy, this leads towards self-conscious emphasis of cultural distinctions between the tribes and the Hindu peasantry as a boundary maintaining device. According to Orans, the more acculturated a tribal is, the more severely he will feel the thrust of emulation-solidarity conflict (see Sinha 1969).

### 4. *Solidarity movements as Revitalization movements*

Whereas Bose and Orans have emphasized the factors of economic and political dominance and aspiration for status in their analysis of the recent tribal solidarity movements and emerging political associations, Wallace, in his concept of 'Revitalization movements', is concerned with the total reorganization of the cultural system of a group in an acculturative situation of extreme stress which threatens the entire cultural system. More especially, a revitalization movement is defined as 'a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying cultural' (Wallace 1956: 265). The beginning of those movements may be traced to a threat to the sustenance of a cultural system by a group of people in a situation of cultural contact with a dominating group. After an initial period of increasing individual stress and 'cultural distortion', it is followed by an active phase of revitalization. This often involves the creation of an idealized myth propounded by a charismatic leader who soon gathers around him a following. At a later phase the movement gets routinized and develops elaborate organizational base. This routinized phase may again release a revitalization cycle under a crisis situation (See also Sinha 1968: 6).

Wallace would, therefore, locate the origin of such movements in a threat to the total cultural system and not just to economic well being; power and rank (status). He would also expect the primary goal of such a movement as reformulation of the total cultural system to be initiated by a charismatic leader.

## VI. THE MODELS CUT DOWN TO SIZE

1. On the basis of brief field work among the Chotanagpur tribes just on the eve of the national election of 1967 it was observed that the ordinary tribal villagers of Ranchi District had very little notion about the political implications of the Jharkhand movement (Sen and Panchbhai 1967). This partly indicates Bose's notion that it is essentially a 'sub-national' political movement cultivated by a limited group of elite interested in consolidating their own economic and political power. However, this does not quite explain why the Jharkhand Party with 'cock' symbol won all the 32 seats in the Bihar Assembly for which they contested in the First General Election of 1952.

In other words, it would be over-simplification to think that these movements have been generated mainly on the basis of the elites' personal interest. It appears to me that the dramatic initial success of the Jharkhand Party has been due to the fact that the leaders have been able to utilize the intense unfavourable image about the outsiders in minds of the tribals in this area (see our paper on the Concept of *Diku*—Sinha, Sen and Panchbhai 1969). It also appears that the leaders have not only been seeking economic or political benefit, they have also been seeking prestige (rank) in the eyes of the dominant outgroup by asserting their control over their separate political, economic and cultural destiny. In a less defined manner the masses also resent their low social status in the eyes of the *Dikus*.

2. While Bose has over-emphasized the role of the elite's self-interest in the recent tribal movements, Orans (*ibid*) seems to have erred on the other side by assuming that the leaders are primarily carrying forward the latent solidarity drives of the tribal masses in the context of 'rank concession syndrome'. Our preliminary field investigation (Sen and Panchbhai, *ibid*) indicates that Orans has under estimated the communication gap between the elite and the masses.

3. The logic of Roy Burman's analytical distinction between infra-nationalism and sub-nationalism is appealing. In terms of empirical types he would perhaps place Naga National Front movement in the one category ('infra') and Jharkhand movement in another ('sub'). But as we examine the structure of the elite, emulation solidarity conflict in their search for new identity, communication gap between the elites and the masses, and the formation of inter-tribal associations the two empirical sets of tribal movements are found to share many significant common elements. If one group has to be categorised as infra-national and the other as sub-national the distinctions will have to be spelled out in more specific terms than has been done so far. In both the situations the leadership is trying to assert solidarity *vis-a-vis* what they define as 'non-tribal Hindu dominated' Indian National Polity. One of the major differences between the two situations is in the degree of involvement in the matrix civilization and the nature of the references group for emulation. In the case of the Jharkhand movement the elite, as well

as the masses, are already too immersed in the Hindu milieu whereas in the case of many of the North-Eastern tribes the reference models of the elite is predominantly Christian white (see Roy 1964) For them the Hindu based core Indian milieu does not offer a reference goal for identity as it does for the encysted tribes like the Munda, Santal, Oraon, Gond and the Bhumij.

4. Wallace's frame of 'revitalization movement' stresses too far on the rise of charismatic/messianic leaders and on the reorganization of the total cultural system to be appropriate in explaining what is happening in the tribal field today. In the cases of the movements mentioned above that the tribal movements have passed the messianic phase to the forming of relatively rational political associations with primary emphasis on power relations and social status than on creating a satisfactory reorganization of the total cultural system. In other words, it will be more fruitful to bring in the cultural context mainly in relation to a situation of competing status and power than placing the primary emphasis on cultural re-organization.

5. As I review the propositions of Bose, Roy Burman and Orans, one problem that come up again and again is the extent to which the movements carry forward the latent aspirations and interests of the tribal masses. Using Edward Sapir's terminology (1924) analogically we may make an attempt to find out to what extent the solidanty movement is 'genuine' or 'spurious'. A 'genuine' movement would be one which expands mass participation in the movement and which carries forward the economic and political power of the masses. Contrarily a movement will be 'spurious' where the link between the cultural ideals of the leadership and the masses is weak and where the movement does not consistently aim and act towards expansion of the economic and political power of the masses.

In assessing the situation in these terms one cannot get over a certain feeling of uneasiness that almost all the Indian anthropologists looking into the situation belong to the Hindu upper castes. Granting the anthropologists' scientific commitment to objectivity and interest about the 'inside view' of situations, it is not unlikely that shades of value judgements are likely to creep in spite of the best of our efforts. It would be useful to have a few studies on the situation by anthropologists belonging to various tribal groups who may look into the situation from a slightly different and complementary vantage point.

## VII. SOME GENERAL PROPOSITIONS

I many now move on to make a few general propositions regarding tribal solidarity movements:

1. The nature and degree of involvement of tribal groups in solidarity movements will depend on:

(a) location of the tribal group *vis-a-vis* the core peasant matrix. This may range from total isolation to existence as scattered minorities



in predominantly non-tribal zones: total isolation (Jarawa, Onge, Sentinelese, Shompen etc. in Andaman and Nicobar Islands): as buffer groups in the international frontier (NEFA tribes, Nagas, Mizos, Kukis, etc.); isolated tribal niches surrounded by Hindu peasantry (Bondo Poroja in Koraput, Hill Maria of Bastar); predominantly tribal blocks in a multi-ethnic region (Ho of Kolhan, Santal Pargana etc.); scattered minorities in a predominantly Hindu region (Santal in Birbhum District) etc.

- (b) number of the tribals *vis-a-vis* non-tribals in a region. (Here the problem of defining a region has to be decided. For certain purposes recent administrative units like Police Station Area, District or State may be used whereas in other cases more archaic units like pargana, feudatory state or a dialect zone may be used).
- (c) degree of exposure to and socio-economic and cultural inter-relationship with the Hindu peasantry (position in the tribe-caste and tribe-peasant continuum).
- (d) level of economy of the tribe.
- (e) level of education of the elite and of the tribal masses.
- (f) historical experience (friendly or hostile) in the encounter with the advanced peasantry and urban population.
- (g) cultural orientation of the elite—Hindu, Moslem and European/Christian.
- (h) pattern of articulation with non-tribal political associations.

It will be seen that locational and ecological isolation has created two distinct types of tribal patterns in India. In one, isolation has led to poor economy, illiteracy and lack of new elite. In the other a section of the tribals have attained westernized education, embraced Christianity and operate as the new elite.

2. It may further be proposed that the intensity of tribal solidarity/separatist movement will be positively correlated to an optimum convergence of the following factors:

- (a) ecological and socio-cultural isolation of the bulk of the tribal population *vis-a-vis* the core peasantry.
- (b) location near the international and inter-civilizational frontier.
- (c) a certain level of numerical strength and economy to provide the striking powers for solidarity movement.
- (d) a certain level of literacy and education to provide elite leadership.
- (e) historical incidence and awareness of conflict with the peasantry and the political super-structure of the peasantry.
- (f) the opportunity for political rank path combined with limited scope for economic emolument.

3. Contrarily, conscious solidarity movements will be weak or absent

under the following circumstances:

- (a) small number and low economic level which is inadequate for generating any striking power.
- (b) absence of educated elite who would provide the leadership.
- (c) where socio-cultural integration has moved too far towards the Hindu peasantry to allow for contra-acculturative boundary maintaining cultural devices.

4. Thus the Onge of Andaman islands and some of the interior tribes of NEFA who are too isolated, have a relatively primitive economic base and lack of literacy and literate elite have not been involved in solidarity movements. They are simply interested in non-interference in their tribal isolation.

In contrast to the above groups sections of the Naga could organize a powerful solidarity movement with a high pitched demand for independence because their ecological isolation and location at an international frontier is combined with a fairly high level of literacy, a sizable literate elite, general orientation towards Europeans and Christianity and historical consciousness of armed conflict with the British Indian administration.

The Jharkhand Movement initiated by the educated elite of the numerically dominant constituent tribes e.g. Santal, Mundas, Ho, Oraon, etc. could not operate their movement as aggressively as that of the Naga National Front. Their location as an encysted block and extensive socio-economic and cultural linkage with the Hindu peasantry inhibited the intensity of solidarity movements compared to those of the Nagas. Located in the same region that relatively primitive hunting and gathering Birhor have been quite indifferent about the Jharkhand movement. Their low economy and number and lack of literate and articulate leadership has made them indifferent to these movements.

Compared to the Munda, Ho and the Santal the Bhumij of Purulia and Singhbhum are far more comprehensively integrated with the Hindu peasantry. Elsewhere I have written that they virtually operate as a Hindu caste (Sinha 1959, 1962, 1965). From this situation it is indeed very hard for the Bhumij to make a common cause with the 'tribals' involved in the Jharkhand movement. With the tribal category thrust upon them by the administration, along with some protective benefits which are confined to the tribals, the Bhumij are thrown into a situation of incapacitating emulation-solidarity dilemma. Whereas the Santal or the Munda elite could be vigorously involved in inter-tribal solidarity movements the Bhumij elite who were too far Hinduized and involved in aspiration for recognition as Rajput found it very difficult indeed to make a common cause with the other Adivasis. In a half-hearted manner these leaders renamed their solidarity association as Bhumij-Kshatriya-Adivasi Association (Sinha 1959).

## VIII. SUMMING UP

From the above general discussion it will be seen that one of the major roots of tribal solidarity movements may be traced to their ecological-cultural isolation, economical backwardness, and feeling of frustration about a lowly status *vis-a-vis* the advanced sections. Although it is true that these movements are guided by a minority of emerging elite, it would be over-simplification to look into the phenomenon exclusively from the perspective of sub-nationalism engineered by a few self-seeking elites. We may discover in these movements both a process of progressive enlargement of socio-political and cultural experience beyond the primitive tribal units and also a process of drawing solidarity boundaries around the expanded horizon *vis-a-vis* the Indian core.

Our review also suggests certain policy guidelines regarding the relatively unintegrated tribes. Assuming that the hitherto isolated tribes should be fully integrated with Indian national polity and the mainstream of the emerging national culture it may be proposed that economic opportunities made available to these areas should be a little ahead of the political opportunities and, as far as possible, the economic opportunities should permeate a broad base of the population instead of being limited to an elite group.

Although we need not, and should not, encroach upon 'the cultural autonomy' of these groups, arrangements should be made for greater acquaintance with the 'emerging core' of Indian national culture so that the elite as well as the masses are oriented towards the core pattern rather than seek an escape model in their search for new identity.

It appears that instead of taking an alarmist position about tribal solidarity movements, one should welcome the 'genuine' solidarity movements (as defined before) and resist the 'spurious' ones. The extent to which we are able to properly identify the 'genuine' tribal movements and meet them with 'genuine' nationalism, our task of building a new nation by integrating the relatively isolated tribes will be successful.

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# Revivalist Movements Among the Tribals of Chotanagpur

PHILIP EKKA

Recently, a growing interest has been shown by Anthropologists in millenarian, messianic, prophetic, cargo cult, and revivalist movements. Most of these movements have been associated with the accelerated impact of sophisticated, technological western civilization on simple societies under colonial domination. The Tana Bhagat movement among the Uraons during the First World War, the Birsa rising among the Mundas during the years 1895-1900 and the Kherwar rising among the Santhals in 1871 all occurring in Bihar were also millenarian and prophetic in character. In as much as these movements reverted to some of the selective features of their old traditional life (e.g. the worship of one only God) for the attainment of tribal independence through the repossession of their ancestral lands, I call them revivalist movements.

## BACKGROUND

The Mundas (Mundari speaking population was 998,690—1961 Census)<sup>1</sup> according to S.C. Roy, are the earliest known settlers of Chota Nagpur. About the beginning of the Christian era, the Uraons (Uraon-speaking population was 1,141,804—1961 Census)<sup>2</sup> followed them there. Both these tribes cleared the original dense forests for cultivation and hence, they consider themselves the real owners of the land. The descendants of the Munda village founders are known as the *khuntkattidars* and they jointly own their village lands. These *khuntkatti* lands were rent free. The high status of *khuntkattidars* can be understood when it is realised that they alone are eligible to the post of the village headman or Munda and the village priest or Pahan, and to lead the deliberations of the panchayats.

Similarly, the descendants of the Uraon village founders were known as *bhuinhars* and although they had no joint ownership of the lands, individual *Bhuinhar* Uraon families were the real owners of the *Bhuinhari* village lands. The Mahto or the Uraon village, headman and the Naigas or the village priest had also to belong to the *Bhuinhari Khunt* or the lineage of the village founders and they enjoyed the usufruct of service lands.

Both these tribes had evolved a democratic system of administration

through their village panchayats or the council of elders. These bodies enforced the customary laws of kinship and marriage and inheritance. The Mundas and Uraons had slowly evolved *Parhas* or confederacies of several villages each for the settlement of inter-village disputes and the regulation of the customary tribal laws. The Munda Parha head is known as the *Manki*, while his Uraon counterpart is called the Parha Raja, among the Uraons.

About the sixth century AD, the Mundas and the Uraons jointly selected a common leader or 'raja'. He was not the sovereign of the land, but only a 'primus inter pares' in times of defence operations. This leader was given voluntary contributions in kind and a few days of free labour every year by the people. A descendant of this leader was made a tributary of the Moghuls in the year 1585. Another of his descendants was taken prisoner by the Moghuls for arrears of tribute and all the diamonds and elephants in his possession were confiscated. On his return from the prison at Gwalior, this Raja surrounded himself with Hindu courtiers and mercenaries and granted them the *jagirs* of Munda and Uraon villages whose contributions they were to enjoy. Later on, the Raja and his courtiers farmed their villages to *thikadars* whose debts they were unable to meet. The immigrant *jagirdars* and *thikadars* introduced land rent in Chota Nagpur and forcibly ousted many of the Mundas and Uraons from their freeholds when these showed reluctance to pay rent or to render unlimited amount of *begar* or forced labour.

Although Chota Nagpur passed into British hand already in 1765 with the Dewani of Bengal, effective British administration was not established before 1834 in Chota Nagpur. The immigrant landlords took advantage of the introduction of Hindu police officers from North Bihar into Chota Nagpur and the opening of the British court at Chatra, Hazaribagh district, to obtain ex-parte decrees to legalise their proprietary rights over the alienated Munda and Uraon ancestral lands.

When the Mundas and Uraons had failed in spite of repeated armed risings, e.g. in the years 1820 and 1831, to regain their lands, they accepted the advice of the Christian Missionaries (who had entered Chota Nagpur in 1845) and tried a legal, constitutional approach to regain their lost rights. But the legal petitions of the *Sardars* or Christian leaders asking for an enquiry into the land alienation problem and for the return of alienated Khuntkatti and Bhuinhari lands, were rejected by the British Government. Instead, the immigrant landlords were recognised as the owners of these ill gotten lands on grounds of prescription. The Mundas rose again in armed rebellion under the leadership of Birsa for the last time in the year 1900. The Government then ordered that a definite survey and settlement of the country be made, and then it passed the *Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act* in 1908. At this juncture Fr. J. Hoffmann S.J. acted as a go between the explained the original Khuntkatti system of the Mundas to the Government. This Act prohibited further alienation of the Munda ancestral lands, but by then 9/10 of the Khuntkatti lands had already passed into alien hands.<sup>3</sup>

It is in this historical setting of a confrontation of the Mundas and Uraons with immigrant landlords and the British administration, that the revivalist cults of Chota Nagpur originated.

#### THE TANA BHAGATS<sup>4</sup>

The official reports of the survey and settlement operations in Chota Nagpur during the years 1902-1908, show clearly that the Uraons of western Chota Nagpur had suffered a greater loss of their ancestral lands and had to pay rent at a much higher rate than their Munda neighbours in the east. It was also in these Uraon areas that the non-tribal landlords made excessive demands on their Uraon tenants for unpaid labour. To make matters worse, the Uraons of the present Bishunpur thana and Mahuadanr thana were submitted to excessive requisitioning for labour during the construction of the summer residence of the Lieutenant Governor on the Neterhat plateau during the years 1912-13. These same people were also forced to act as beaters during hunts and as carriers of baggages of the local police for a mere pittance.

The Uraons of these areas were in desperation as they were quite unable to have their wrongs redressed by recourse to law, for the law courts were not only too distant, but also too expensive and incomprehensible to the illiterate Uraons. It was in these circumstances of deprivation and oppression by the local landlords and police, that the Tana Bhagat millenarian cult sprang up in 1914 and swept through the Uraon country gaining some 26,000 adherents at its peak period.

In the month of April 1914, when a certain Jatra Uraon of Chingri village close to Bishunpur circle, Gumla thana, Ranchi district, proclaimed that in a vision he had of *Dharmas* or God he had received a revelation for the Uraons, he got an enthusiastic following. Jatra proclaimed that it was God's order that henceforth the Uraons should adore God alone through prayer and *Bhakti* or devotion and that they should completely abandon the worship of the minor spirits or *bhuts*, and do away with animal sacrifice. It was also God's command that they should lead an ascetic life and give up meat, alcoholic drinks, traditional songs and dances and showy ornaments. The Uraons ought, further, to stop ploughing the fields and paying rents to the landlords and to refuse to engage themselves as labourers to any non-Uraon.

Jatra taught his followers what he claimed were divinely inspired prayers and incantations for exercising spirits, curing diseases and for neutralising the evil spells of witches. He warned them that those who did not follow him would soon perish, that the foreigners would soon be expelled from the country, that the Uraon-raj was about to begin and that he would be its first king.

Because of his refusal to allow his followers to work for the Zamindars and the Government, Jatra and his leading disciples were arrested and produced before the subdivisional court, tried and sentenced to imprisonment. After finishing his prison term, Jatra abandoned his leadership of the

movement, worked as a labourer in the construction of the new Neterhat road and died two years later of disease.

Other prophets then took over the direction of the movement, which received a great impetus in 1915, when the early victory of the Germans was being talked about everywhere. The new cultists not only abandoned the worship of the *bhuts*, but they expelled them out of the country with a mass exorcism. They marched across the Uraon country chanting incantations making loud invocations to all the beneficent powers known to them (e.g. the moon, stars, ancient heroes like Birsa, and the victorious German Kaiser) to come to their aid and expel the spirits. From their endless repetitions of "tana baba tana", *pull out father, pull out*, in their exorcism hymns, the new cultists came to be nicknamed "Tana Bhagats" by the outsiders.

Rumours of a coming massacre of the non-Uraons by the Tana Bhagats frightened the former so much that they fled to the town for safety. But a prompt posting of the police force at all the likely trouble spots forestalled any break of violence.

The belief in a coming deliverer became at one time quite strong in the Tana Bhagats. In 1916, it was said that very soon, either God himself or an envoy of his such as Birsa Munda of the German Kaiser would come and set the Uraons free. In Palamau this belief became so strong that several of the Tana Bhagats took off some rows of tiles from the roofs in order to facilitate the entry of the messias into their homes. They also took the precaution of killing their dogs lest their barkings should disturb his advent. Some Tana Bhagats actually called at the *Mahuadanr* thana and demanded from the policy a copy of the *bahi* or the legal document of the Kaiser authorising them to rule over the Kaiser had already arrived in Chota Nagpur bringing a cartload of gold for his Uraons.

Peace was finally restored in the Ranchi district by the end of 1917, but the movement now spread among the Uraon labourers in the tea estates of Assam and a rising of the Uraons was feared there. In 1918, a rebellion in the native state of Surguja by the Tana Bhagats had to be suppressed by a military force.

Between the year 1917 and 1920, the Tana Bhagats formulated their creed and their new rules of conduct. They became convinced monotheists and gave up the worship of old spirits. Thursday was chosen as a sabbath day for rest and prayer meetings. They prescribed a very ascetic life for their followers asking them to give up meat eating, liquor drinking, dancing in the village square, and hunting. Daily baths became a very popular ritual with the Tana Bhagats. Finally interdining as well as intermarriage with non-Bhagats were tabooed.

From 1920, most of the Tana Bhagats joined the Indian National Congress<sup>5</sup> political party and played a prominent part in the non-co-operation movement launched by Gandhiji. They went to jail for refusing to pay their rents and for



boycotting country liquor shops and foreign goods. To this day they are very much attached to the Congress cause, but they have not yet abandoned their dream of an eventual advent of the Uraon-raj and many of them resolutely refuse to pay their rent to the State Government just as they had once done to the British Government.

In the past the Congress Government of Bihar had been very solicitous for the welfare of the Tana Bhagats out of gratitude for their strong backing during the national struggle for independence from 1921 onwards. It has passed a special bill "the Tana Bhagat Agricultural Lands Restoration Act", with a view to returning the lands, which they had lost on their refusal to pay rent to the British Government. A special Tana Bhagat Officer has been appointed at Ranchi in order to facilitate the recovery of these lost lands, and a lawyer in the pay of the Government gives the Tana Bhagats free legal advice. All the Tana Bhagat children are entitled to receive free education in all the Government schools. Further, some 300 Tana Bhagat political sufferers receive a monthly stipend of Rs. 30/- each. Finally, free medical and agricultural subsidies are also offered to the Tana Bhagats. Many of these benefits, alas, reach the Tana Bhagat only in dribblets, for, as a Tana Bhagat put it, "there is much soakage in the way".

The Tana Bhagats now number roughly 10,000 souls. These too are divided into several sub-sects based on little differences of observances: e.g. the eating the *aru* rice, drinking of rice beer, venerating the cow etc. The attendance at their prayer meeting is rather thin. Their religious observance is now confined to their daily ritual bath and occasional hymn singing. They still set a great store by the rule of abstention from meat and liquor, as they expect this to raise them in the esteem of the Hindus. They still try to foster Tana Bhagat endogamy. Some have started venerating the cow, and while they have given up practically all their traditional Uraon feasts, they still keep the cattle feast of *Sahrai*. Another feast rather popular with the Tana Bhagats is the *Naohandi* or the renewal of the pots, during which old earthen cooking pots are discarded and the sacred thread of the Tana Bhagat family members is renewed, and the Congress flag is hoisted in the courtyard. In short, the process of "sanskritization" is quite advanced among the Tana Bhagats and they show some caste like stratification in their social structure. Yet they have not violated the traditional rule of Tribal endogamy, and so they consider themselves true Uraons.

In order to show that the Tana Bhagat movement was no isolated incident but a mere phase in the general efforts of the Tribes of Chota Nagpur to rid themselves of the oppression and injustices they were subjected to by non-tribal immigrants who had usurped their agrarian rights and tribal autonomy, I shall briefly describe a similar movement among the Mundas between the years 1895-1900.

THE BIRSAITE MOVEMENT<sup>6</sup>

In 1895, when the encroachment of the immigrant landlords on Munda *Khuntkatti* lands of the original village founders had reached a limit, when thousands of labourers were being allured to the tea estates of Assam by a wily recruiting agents, and when famine was staring the Mundas in the face, Birsa Munda had also risen as a prophet and started preaching a new religion.

On Christmas eve 1899, several murderous attacks were made simultaneously throughout the country by the Birsaites. A large group attacked the police station at Khunti, in the Munda district, killed a constable and burned some houses. A military force was sent out to round up the rebels and confronted them on a hill top behind barricades. They refused to surrender to the soldiers and when the first volley of British bullets fell short of range, the rebels, convinced that the bullets had indeed turned into water, rushed at the soldiers, who shot down some twenty of the rebels at point blank range. Birsa and his surviving followers escaped, but were later captured. Birsa died in jail pending his trial and his body was publicly cremated in order to convince his followers that he was no god but a mere mortal. Yet to this day, many still believe that Birsa is not dead and will return some day to save his people.

THE HOS OF SINGBHUM<sup>7</sup>

The Hos or the Larka Kols are very closely allied to the Mundas ethnically, linguistically and culturally. They are today mostly settled in Singbhum district of Chota Nagpur division of Bihar State with Chaibasa as the administrative headquarters.

After several strenuous campaigns of the East India Company forces, the Hos were first reduced to submission in 1821, but they soon broke their treaty and joined the rebellion of the Chota Nagpur Mundas in 1831-32. As a result of this the Kolhan or the Ho-country was annexed as a government estate in 1837 by T. Wilkinson, the Agent of the Governor General for the newly formed "South Western Frontier Agency".

Simple rules of administration for the Kolhan were drawn up and promulgated, and in their main features persist to this day. The system of government through the Ho tribal heads; the *Pir-Mankis* and the *Village-Mundas* was maintained. These leaders were now given the functions of police officers and collectors of government dues, and they were empowered to deal with petty civil and criminal cases. They were in the pay of the government. This preservation of the structure of traditional Ho-leadership and the exclusion of non-tribal middlemen from the local administration seems to have preserved the sense of honour and identity of the Hos to such an extent, that the subsequent introduction of the British courts and

the police and revenue systems in the Kolhan does not seem to have disturbed the Hos unduly. Though closely allied to the Mundas, the Hos have been rather impervious to millenarian, prophetic or revivalist cults, and they have been only slightly receptive of non-tribal religious propaganda.

#### CONCLUSION

It is clear that the Birsa and Tana Bhagat movements had arisen in times of acute national crises of the Munda and Uraon tribes after their pragmatic methods for the redress of their wrongs by military and legal approaches had failed. The original privileged ownership of the "Khuntkatti" and "Bhuinhari" lands had mostly passed into the semi-feudal land tenure under the immigrant landlords and was finally transformed into a contractual settlement on cash rent basis with the British Government. Yet, the idea that the Mundas and the Uraons, the descendants of the earliest settlers of Chota Nagpur still persists. This explains much of the tensions and dissatisfactions of the millenarian scene of Chota Nagpur. This too is still the motive force of the present Jharkhand movement of the Mundas and Uraons. The agrarian changes also indirectly account for some acute social changes in other spheres of the Munda-Uraon life. Where the service lands had passed into alien hands, it became difficult to maintain the institution of village priesthood. This in its wake brought the placation of the village spirits into relative neglect. The penetration of Christianity among the Mundas and Uraons encouraged the emergence of new leadership in the persons of the *catechists* and *parsons*. This resulted, to some extent, in the undermining of the traditional leadership of the village priest and the village council or the panchayat. In order to counteract these inroads into the traditional structure of their societies, the Mundas and Uraons were now compelled to readjust their basic values, under the leadership of prophetic leaders, to suit the new conditions.

In contrast to them, the Hos who had managed to preserve their traditional structure of village headmanship and *pir* leadership, albeit with newly acquired roles of petty police officers and rent collectors, were not unduly upset by the introduction of British courts and the survey and settlement of the Kolhan. The Hos were untouched by revivalist movements at this period and they were only slightly receptive of non-tribal religions.

If the Mundas and Uraons are to be drawn into the mainstream of Indian National life, their horizon will have to be widened to consider the whole of India as their motherland and they will have to ask themselves what they can do for India. In this phase of their history, it will be the task of social scientists, administrators, tribal leaders and missionaries to play the prophetic role of showing the way of how the Mundas and Uraons can play their creative role in modern India's nation building process without losing either their true identity or integrity.

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# The Jharkhand Movement

JYOTI SEN

The movement for the separate state of Jharkhand began three decades ago. The factors which generated this movement and kept up it alive may be summed up as the growing discontent among the tribal people of Chotanagpur on account of alienation of land, exploitation by money-lenders etc., a strong antipathy towards *Dikus* or non-tribals, and political developments in the wider setting of the country.

The total tribal population in Bihar amounts to a little over 42 lakhs comprising 9.05% of total population of the state. Tribal concentration is mainly in the plateau region which lies in the southern portion of the state, being a continuation of the Vindhya range it extends upto Orissa in the south and Bengal in the east. Chotanagpur Division and the Santal Parganas of the adjacent Bhagalpur Division are situated on this plateau. Out of the six districts contained in these two Divisions, tribes are in a clear majority in the Ranchi district forming 61.61% of the total population; Singhbhum ranks next having a tribal population of 47.31%.

The Oraon, the Munda and the Ho are the major tribal communities in Chotanagpur. The first two communities are mainly inhabitants of Ranchi district whereas the third is mainly confined to Singhbhum (99.8%).

The tribal communities of Chotanagpur are quite distinct from the rest of their non-tribal neighbours with regard to their ownership rights on land, their culture and language. These communities had taken refuge in this area at different periods of history and lived in comparative isolation for a long time. Later on they came in contact with the Hindu peasant and artisan castes who had infiltrated from the adjacent districts. A gradual process of acculturation set in and a symbiotic relationship grew up between some of the castes and the tribal communities living side by side in the villages. The pressure on land also increased as a consequence.

The introduction of the *jagirdari* system in the eighteenth century followed, by an influx of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh traders, a century later, considerably altered tribal life. There grew up a new class of landlords from among the new comers who looked down on the tribals as uncivilized savages. These new landlords and their employers not only extracted rent but also tyrannized over them in many ways. As a result, the tribals lost

their ownership rights and were converted to mere tenants, subject to various forms of exploitation. Another class of exploiters that emerged from among the non-tribals were the usurious moneylenders who gave them loans against the security of land and charged high rates of interest which the tribals were unable to pay. As a result they progressively became landless. The brought about a deep sense of dissatisfaction and was followed by continuous uprisings between 1789 and 1900.

Another line of development was taking place side by side from the middle of the past century. The advent of the Christian Missions marked a new era, for it brought the convert opportunities for education, employment and economic improvement.

In 1936 Provincial Autonomy came into force in provinces of India when Orissa was also separated from Bihar as a separate Province. All this had its repercussion on the educated *adibasis*. It dawned on them that the way to political power and progress lay in the formation of a separate *adivasi* state.

#### JHARKHAND MOVEMENT

The already existing Chotanagpur Unnati Samaj which had been organized in 1928 by a few educated tribal christians for the uplift of the tribals was renamed as the Adibasi Sabha. It was decided at the annual conference of May 1938 that the Adibasi would serve as the only political party to represent tribal interests. It was stated that the physical type, mental make up, culture, language and the values of the Adibasis (tribals) were distinct from the non-tribals. The former was the majority community in Chotanagpur and Santal Parganas. The proportion of welfare work for the Adibasis was negligible when compared to the income from mineral wealth and forest produce of the area. The Adibasis were losing their identity, as primary education was being imparted through the medium of Hindi which was for them, only a bazaar language. In relation to the population of Bihar, the Adibasis were a minority. In view of the above facts it was considered detrimental to the Adibasi interests to remain within Bihar. A separate province of Jharkhand was therefore demanded comprising Chotanagpur and the Santal Parganas.

Jaipal Singh was elected the President of the Adibasi Sabha in 1939. Under his leadership the movement gathered momentum. After Independence a democratic form of government was established based on universal adult franchise. As a result, new tendencies towards group solidarity came into being everywhere. In 1951 the Adibasis Sabha took the name of Jharkhand Party and was organized as a full-fledged political party under the leadership of Jaipal Singh. He succeeded in bringing together Christians, non-Christians, urban and rural people under its common banner. The movement spread all over Chotanagpur and beyond, even among the Tea Garden labourers of North Bengal who were emigrants from this area.

In the meantime, Block Development programmes were launched which broke down their isolation to some extent. The Blocks were staffed mainly with non-tribals. The opening of new communications further accentuated the contact process as there was a sudden influx of non-tribal population from all parts of Bihar as well as from the other states. Many new small-scale and large-scale industries sprang up in this region in a comparatively short time. Substantial areas of land were occupied and a large number of tribals were displaced. Since in all avenues of employment, whether in industries or in services the Adibasis had to face the "alien" competitor, their feeling of frustration increased all the more. This was one of the main propaganda materials of the Jharkhand leaders which helped in the growth of an internal solidarity and outgroup antagonism. A strong antipathy was generated towards the *Diku* or foreigner.

While we were in the Anthropological Survey of India, a study was undertaken as to who are the *Dikus*. It was interesting to note that the connotation has changed from time to time. Originally it used to mean the Zamindar of his employees who were non-tribals. Later, at the beginning of the movement it was meant for non-tribals of the upper class. At present it is used to mean "the people of North Bihar", "those who come from the other side of the Ganga", "those who earn their living here and send their earnings out to their own homes in Bihar". These people were described as "cheats", "tyrants", "looters", "dacoits" and so on. One of the Jharkhand slogans for the elections were "*Jharkhand abua daku diku senoa*" (Jharkhand is ours, the dacoit *dikus* will go).

The formation of states like Andhra, Maharashtra and Nagaland has had a profound effect on the Jharkhand leaders. The Jharkhand Party was merged with the Congress in 1963. It has been mentioned by the leaders again and again in public meetings and gatherings that the above-mentioned states have been formed from within the Congress. "If we also follow the course taken by the leaders in those states and be a little militant we shall also achieve our goal". One group of leaders thought that student should be organized and given training in militant methods.

Even though the party ceased to exist officially, the movement did not die out after merger of the Jharkhand Party with the Congress. There were attempts to revive it at different levels. The older generation of leaders whose glories had waned in course of the last two decades were trying to revive it at the socio-cultural level. They wanted to keep the membership confined to the tribals only. The younger generation of leaders on the other hand were eager to have a full-fledged party uniting the different splinter groups of the Jharkhand Party that had cropped up. They wanted to extend the membership to non-tribals also who were not *Dikus* and had settled in Chotanagpur for generations.

## PRESENT POSITION

During my last tour to Ranchi and Singhbhum in July 1969, I contacted student leaders, Church leaders and political leaders. They were unanimous that misrule and exploitation in Chotanagpur had reached its height. Successive incidents such as the firing in Chiri (June 1968), beating up of a tribal student by the son of a village moneylender within the college premises, the beating up of tribal students, both girls as well as boys, has led to a tense situation.

## BIRSA SEVA DAL

The Birsa Seva Dal was organized at the suggestion of Jaipal Singh two years ago (1967). In the beginning this Seva Dal advocated the causes of the Adivasi students and workers. They dealt with cases of delay in the payment of scholarships, difficulties in admission to the postgraduate classes and so on. Whenever they came to know about cases of employment or promotion of Adivasi candidates had been suppressed, they brought it to the notice of the higher authorities and sought justice. When the communal riots broke out in Ranchi on 22nd August 1967 the Seva dal organized a 'Peace Dal' which went round convincing the Adivasis that they should not get mixed up in this communal riot.

Recent happenings like the Chiri firing, etc. have brought this party into the limelight. It was remarked by most of the persons interviewed that the party was gradually passing into the hands of the Communists who provided money and leadership. A few of the Muslim sufferers during the recent riots had also sympathies with this party and the separation movement; they had supplied money to the Seva Dal and the Adivasi Mahasabha recently organized by a section of the Jharkhandis. In a statement to the Deputy Commissioner, Ranchi, the Christian Churches clarified their stand. The churches always acted as champions of the rights of the poor and the oppressed. It was the Missionaries who mostly educated the backward classes of this area and turned them into enlightened citizens of India. They were still ready to stand by the rights of the poor and the oppressed, but they dissociated themselves completely from any group that advocated violence and used such means to seek a redress of their grievances. Some of the Church leaders expressed grave concern that Communists, Muslims and the Jana Sanghis were trying to reap benefits from the prevailing tension.

The student leaders were of the opinion that they were disgusted with the "self interested power-seeking leaders" who could be purchased by a party. They were tired of false promises. Now that they had faced police firing, they had shed their fear and were prepared to go to any length for their own people. The veteran leaders of the Jharkhand Party said that the Jharkhand Party was far from dead. It would soon be re-organized as "*Jharkhand Prant Dal*" and its field of activity would be in the rural areas.



### SOURCES OF DISCONTENT

1. Alienation of land is one of the major causes of discontent. Several large and small-scale industries have come up within a short time both in the public and private sectors, occupying large areas like H.E.C., Bakaro Steel etc. This has displaced large numbers of tribals. Rehabilitation of these people is the responsibility of the State government. It is reported from time to time that this responsibility has not been fulfilled so far. There is further alienation of land on account of inability of the poor Adibasi peasant to repay his debts after paying the high rates of interest.

2. After Independence and a rapid spread of education among the tribals, the demand for jobs in the services has gone up. The authorities of the large-scale projects had agreed to employ one person from each family in the project in addition to the payment of a compensation to the dispossessed tribals. There is a widespread complaint among the tribals that the former agreement has not been honoured. One complaint is that even when there are tribal candidates with requisite qualification, they are rejected in preference to "candidates" from North Bihar.

3. It is also said that the compensation money does not reach the tribal people in full. Even then whatever is paid is either wasted on liquor or on unproductive investments for lack of experience and knowledge. To give work is evidently more important than giving monetary compensation alone.

4. Apart from the Christian Missions, there seem to be no voluntary organization which takes intelligent and effective interest in the welfare of the tribals. There is none to give them proper guidance in matters relating to proper utilization of the official benefits meant for them. Blocks have not yet started functioning as they should. There is a lot of discontent with regard to the Block Staff and the government officials who are alleged to look down on them as inferior *junglis*.

### REMEDIES SUGGESTED TO REMOVE THIS DISCONTENT

1. Wherever tribals have been dispossessed of their land they should be given alternative land as compensation and some assistance and guidance for proper rehabilitation.

2. A Debt Settlement Board was set up during the Fazlul Haque Government in Bengal in 1939. This proved successful and freed a very large number of peasants from debts for which they had been paying interest over the years. A similar Debt Settlement Board can be set up immediately in Chotanagpur for writing off debts which are outstanding for more than 10 years. This Board should consist of tribal leaders and such non-tribals who command the confidence of the tribal people, like sympathetic lawyers and government servants.

3. Since this is a sensitive area, only very experienced and efficient officials should be posted here instead of new recruits, who can deal with the people tactfully and sympathetically and with knowledge.

4. Such voluntary organizations as the Adimjati Seva Mandal should be handed over mainly to tribal leaders who can take to social welfare work efficiently in the rural areas. They should also help the people to avail of the opportunities meant for them.

# An Appraisal of the Leadership Pattern Among the Tribes of Bihar

L.P. VIDYARTHI

During the last 22 years India is making a bold experiment in democratic form of government. Since 1947 India has passed through several happy as well as unhappy experiences. Among the positive achievements of this period which have, to an extent, fulfilled the national hopes, mention may be made of the integration of princely states into the Indian territory, development both in the field of agriculture and of industry, increase in educational facilities and in opportunities for the economic and social independence of women. Along with these there is a debit side as well. The items listed there on the debit side also add up to an impressive total. Politically, the evil forces of regionalism, communalism and linguism have all emerged into vocal and forceful existence, and appear to be attacking the very foundation of our national identity. Casteism and tribalism, though seem to be weakening as a social force, are now gathering a new strength as a political power and are playing, sometimes unholy roles in many elections.<sup>1</sup> In the sphere of economic development a widespread inequality in income and wealth is discernible which has led to discontent and frustration to certain sections of the people. On the social side members of the oppressed or neglected communities have some advantage over the previous position. This has, however, only brought into sharper focus the disabilities, the exploitation and discrimination they suffer from and their discontent is now beginning to take an aggressive turn.

In the course of this democratic experiment, India has to tackle problems of varied magnitude which need to be understood and tackled differently. In this paper I will like to confine my analysis to certain forces and problems that are being generated in the tribal areas in general and tribal Bihar in particular. As I have been familiar with the tribal situations of middle India specially of tribal Bihar as I have been currently conducting a large scale research on the changes in the tribals leadership pattern. I like to highlight the basic tribal problems as reflected at the level of the emerging leadership in this area. From the experience of being with the changing tribes of Chotanagpur for the last eighteen years as well by being in biographic contacts of the tribal elites of different type, it is interesting for this author to understand their changing states of mind, or to analyse the difference between what elder people think and what younger people think and feel. Their strategic roles

specially in the state assembly and in the cabinet of Bihar now determine the stabilities or instabilities of the government in the whole state. In view of this, it is high time to delve deeply into these intricacies to get the real picture of the changing need, policy, and programmes of the tribal leaders for our own education as well as in the larger interest of the nation.

The tribal population in India, as elsewhere, has lived in the comparative isolation and owing to this, in some ways, it has remained somewhat apart from the main stream of society in the country. Partly because of this isolation, caused owing to ecological and historical factors, and partly because of their limited world view, characterised by overall tradition-orientation, they are intergrated in terms of certain age-old themes rooted in the hoary past. These integrative themes and a special cultural focus as it has been observed by distinguished anthropologists have given them a separate cultural identity, and they often possess latent or manifest value-attitude and motivational system which are remarkably different from those of other people. This distinctive ethos raises for them a series of tangled problems of social, economic and general cultural adjustment and I propose to discuss these problems of integration with the rest of the population in context with the emerging leadership pattern among them. Though I am aware of the several approaches<sup>2</sup> to the tribal problems, as reflected in the efforts of the external agencies like the government agencies, social workers, missionaries, it would be my exclusive attempt here to confine my discussion to some aspect of emerging tribal leadership and its basic approach to the tribal affairs.

#### TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

The tribal belt of middle India comprising the portions of Orissa, Chotanagpur, and Santhal Pargana in Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and adjoining areas of Maharashtra have been characterised with Jharkhand movement which have been agitating for the formation of a separate state of the tribals in Middle India. The movement which has passed through several initial stages of development in Chotanagpur discussed elsewhere<sup>3</sup> eventually emphasised political functions since 1937 and specially after India's independence. The demand for the formation of separate Jharkhand state under the auspices of A.I. Jharkhand party which received the first fillip during the visit of States Reorganization Commission continued to be followed very vigorously till recently under the leadership of Jaipal Singh who found it impracticable, and who preferred to join hands with the National Congress. The tribal situation in Middle India has been obviously different and less troublesome from that of north-eastern India as the former has been in long contacts with the rest of the country. Historically the tribals living in Middle India have been in closer contact with the regional culture of Hinduism and, in many ways, have contributed to, as well as been influenced by, the main stream of Indian



civilization. The major tribal communities of this region which witnessed several revitalization movements during the nineteenth century had been under the process of integration with the rest of the Indian culture. However, owing to certain developments, which they share with certain other regions of the country, are characterised with the concept of sub-nationalism.

#### THE RECENT FORCES AND TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

The tribal area of Middle India during the recent times, has further been exposed to the modern forces owing to the exploitation of mineral sources, establishment of mineral base industries, emergence of industrial, commercial and administrative centres etc. The pace of industrialization and with it that of urbanization has been greatly accelerated in this belt and especially in Chotanagpur after India's independence. The number of towns related with mining, manufacturing, communication and power project increased in large number. With this, urban population also increased with accelerated speech and all these developments<sup>4</sup> brought about considerable change in the life ways of the local people. A section of local people had to face land alienation and a phase of social disruption. Our studies of culture change among the tribals of Middle India lead us to infer that the net result of the uprooted tribals, in due course, is loss of traditional occupation, land, houses, the traditional way of life, exhaustion of cash received by way of compensation, unemployment, keen and unfair competition with the migrants in labour markets, high aspirations and great frustration.

In view of these current disruptive forces and changing aspirations of the people a section of educated, urbanized and politically conscious tribal communities have taken up the challenge of the time and have prepared themselves to give lead to their innocent tribal brethren in the new situation. The general climate in this country has also given them impetus to press the demand for the separate state of Jharkhand and press for the advantage for their respective groups which find expression in tribalism, regionalism, localism and sometimes in religious extremes. Though under the wake of modernising and secularising forces released in the Middle India, the disruptive tribal leaders, so far, have found themselves helpless to fight the battle at the ethnic or religious levels, from time to time frustrations find expression in the organization of leadership on ethnic level, in the unrest of the tribal students, and the consolidation of the tribal elite under the pan-Christian organization and so on. All these have disturbed the function of the integrative forces and have given a fresh lease to the ethnic and indigenous regional symbols, and has led to the development of sub-nationalism among a section of the tribal elite of Middle India.

The study of tribal leadership in tribal Bihar which has been a concern of our research for the last half decade can be broadly summarized here

under categories. First, the historic tribal movements led by certain charismatic leaders against the injustices of the British rule have been referred to as they provide a background, and they continue to inspire the contemporary agitations. Secondly, the interactions of the contemporary traditional leaders with the emerging leaders and their relative influence have been analysed in the light of field data collected from different tribes, and their villages of different levels of acculturation. In course of such an appraisal, efforts have been made to locate and categorise the tribal leaders of rural and urban areas in certain parts of Chotanagpur with a view to relate them functionally and historically. Thirdly, the factual data regarding tribal leadership collected during the last general election have been discussed with a view to indicate the political implications of the tribal leadership at the village, regional, state and national levels. Lastly, in the light of these studies of the tribal leaders, the socio-economic and political problems confronting our nation in context with the tribal situation will be highlighted and the probable solutions be indicated.

#### PATTERN OF TRIBAL REBELLIONS

Chotanagpur and Santhal Parganas have witnessed a series of successive rebellions right from the days of the foundation of British rule in this part of the country.<sup>5</sup> The freedom-loving tribal people of Chotanagpur were the only people who fought relentlessly against the British army for years for every inch of their land before they could accept British overlordship. Specially the period of 1795 to 1800 witnessed the trial of strength between British force and tribal people. Thakur Bhojanath Sahay of Tamar was a leader of these people who fought against the new British authority. The whole *jungle mahal* was in revolt and fought against the British army in Midnapur, Koelpal, Dhadha Ghastshila, Jhalda, Silli, Tamar and the adjoining areas. This rebellion was very much due to the faulty and alien system of government which was trust upon the freedom loving people of Tamar and adjoining parganas. Under similar pressure the Maler of the Rajmahal hills rose into rebellion in 1772 and gave a difficult time to the British army and the people of the plains. In Singhbhum the Hos living in the "Saranda" of seven hundred hills carried out their tactics of irregular warfare and rose into rebellion several times to protect their freedom and check the exploitation by the Britishers and the local Zamindars. As these were splendid fighting people popularly known as "Lakra Kols", the Rajas made full use of them as powers in the game of power-politics in the quarrel with each other.

In the district of Ranchi and its contiguous area the ferment of unrest was equally great which burst forth in open revolts several times. The great Kol rising of 1831 which continued for a couple of years aroused the spirit of insurrection in the two numerically major tribes of Ranchi, the Munda and the Oraons.

While the Government had scarcely recovered from the shock of this insurrection, the Kols of Manbhum and Singhbhum also broke out in open arms under the leadership of Sri Ganga Narayan Singh, a member of Barabhum Raj family. Though this widespread rebellion of 1831-33 was suppressed at a great effort and though Ganga Narayan fell fighting in February 1833 at Hindo-Sahie, this ushered in a new epoch in the country's administration when general regulations for these areas were withdrawn and a non-regulation province of south-west frontier agencies under regulation XIII of 1832 was constituted.

While Chotanagpur had been experiencing a new pang under the Britishers, Santhal Paraganas was seething with this discontent and the faggots were getting ready for wild conflagration. The fire of rebellion broke out in Santhal Pargana in 1855 when Sindhu and Kanhu provided leadership to the discontented Santhal. On 30 June 1855 about 10,000 Santhals met at Bhagnadihi where the divine order that the Santhals should get out of their oppressors' control was announced to them by Sidhu and Kanhu. The Santhal declared their determination to do away with Bengali and up-country Mahajan to take possessions of the country and set up a government of their own.

The Santhal insurrection of 1855-57 was equally violent widespread and effective. As a result of this an enquiry was made into the grievances of the Santhal by Ashley Eden. The result was the Acts of XXXVII of 1858 which formed the Santhal area into a separate non-regulation district to be known by the general name of the Santhal Parganas.<sup>6</sup>

In addition to these large scale rebellions several other revolts such as the Bhokta rising and Rai movement of 1857, Sardari Larai or Mulki Larai were fought in the different parts of Chotanagpur. Among the recent rebellions, mention may be made of the movements led by Birsa Munda which continue to energise the contemporary tribal population of Chotanagpur and Santhals Parganas. The socio-political and economic revitalisation movement launched by Birsa in 1897-1900 got momentum and it was very difficult for the British government to suppress this armed rebellion.<sup>7</sup> Credit goes to the Calcutta press to support the agitation in favour of the tribals. In Bengal legislative council, Sir Surendra Nath Banerjee championed their cause. Owing to all these efforts and owing to the precious martyrdom government had to recognise *khutkhatti* system, order survey and settlement of the district of Ranchi, and to enact Chotanagpur Tenancy Act.

To conclude, then, till the end of 19th century the traditional and charismatic leaders provided leadership to the respective regions in Chotanagpur and some of them led the tribals during the resistance movement launched by them. Some of these resistance movements were led by the local Hindu leaders who had full sympathy with the cause of the tribals. These leaders were not so much educated but they were supposed to have received

divine guidance through dreams or otherwise to lead the masses. The leadership in these movements obviously, were religious, social, economic as well as political. Typically, these leaders preached abstinence of beef eating, and of fowl, pig, ox and buffalo sacrifice, to worship of sanskritic deities and the purging of tribal spirit and gods, non-payment of land and forest revenue and service to their own tribes-men. At the cultural level it appears that the model before these traditional tribal leaders was that of a pure form of Hinduism and their primary purpose was to sanskritise the way of life of their followers by teaching them the principles of ritualistic life ways of Hindus. Here the following quotation of Tallents<sup>8</sup> about the influence of a successful traditional tribal leader, Birsa Munda may be given:

It is reported that in the Khunti, Torpa and Tamar Thans of Ranchi district there are some six or seven hundred Mundas who worship the one God under the name of Birsa Bhagwan and observe various customs which are not those of their fellow Mundas. Outwardly they are to be known by the three flags which they keep planted outside their houses and by the sacred thread which they wear, they still do not sacrifice goats or fowls like other Mundas, they do not eat fish or flesh nor do they touch drugs or any intoxicating drink. Generally they are drawn from the more extreme and excitable part of the Munda community.

#### PATTERN OF CONTEMPORARY TRIBAL LEADERSHIP

This rural-bred charismatic and tradition-oriented leadership which worked for revitalizing the tribals on the Hindu model was later greatly disturbed owing to the devoted work of the missionaries and their continuous efforts to uplift the tribals brought about new standards for choosing leadership. Between the death of Birsa and the third General Election in 1962 appears the leadership of the tribals in Chotanagpur remained in the hands of western-educated and urban-bred, Christian tribals who were exclusively responsible for interpreting and tackling political situation under different religio-political organisations like Chotanagpur Catholic Sabha, Chotanagpur Adivasi Mahasabha and lastly All India Jharkhand Party. During this period except a few like Bandi Oraon most of the leaders were christian. Among them mention may be made of Jaipal Singh, Peter Heward, Ignes Beck, Rev. Joel Lakra, Boniface Lakra and several others who from time to time worked out a plan for the social, economic and political development of the tribals of Chotanagpur, and later, under the banner of A.I. Jharkhand party gave the slogan of the creation of a separate Jharkhand state. The roles played by the christian tribal leaders maintained its tempo till the third General Election when mainly christian leaders were elected to the Assembly and the Parliament from the reserved constituencies. In course of the application of the



questionnaire also in 1960 not a single non-converted tribal was named among the top leaders. Out of the 22 persons who were named leaders only five belonged to the non-christian tribals. These top leaders of the converted tribals were highly educated—six were graduates, five under-graduates and the rest five were non-Matriculates. All of them had been educated in christian schools and had inculcated in them the western model through the missionary teachers. Two of them have also been educated in foreign countries. Regarding the place of residence of 22 leaders, 17 have settled in Ranchi city permanently and only five still have their close affiliation with their respective villages. Among these 17 leaders, eleven leaders have settled down in Ranchi before 1920, and they have largely been oriented to city life. As regards their political affiliation till 1962, except eight, all of them belonged to the Jharkhand Party. Among these eight who belonged to the Congress party, only two of them were from the converted tribals.<sup>9</sup>

This christian-oriented and western educated model which became the exclusive model of leadership for several decades is also breaking its exclusiveness. The Jharkhand Party which had the dominance of christian adivasis and which was essentially started for the consolidation of christian converts fast expanded its scope and the non-tribal element got associated with it, and it started emphasising the needs of the region. With these secularised objectives, political pressure and persuasion and above all owing to the political convenience of the top leaders of the Jharkhand Party, was merged with the major political party of the country, the Congress. This marked a turning point in the political behaviour of the people, which finds its reflections in the last General Election.

An analysis<sup>10</sup> of the election results of the reserved seats with fourth general election reveals that there were 194 candidates for 29 reserved Assembly seats while 32 candidates for the five reserved Parliamentary seats. Out of these 194 candidates for Assembly seats we find the highest percentage of the Santhal who constituted 28.86 per cent while the other communities namely the Oraon (25.26%), the Munda (22.68%), the Ho (16.49%), the Kharia (3.61%) and the Kherwar (1.03%) constituted lesser percentages. In Parliamentary constituencies also the Santhal were at the top constituting 34.38% while the other communities in the descending sequential order were those of the Munda (21.88%), the Oraon 18.75%), the Ho (18.75%) and then Kharia and Chik Baraik having the lowest position with 3.12 per cent each.

Among the 29 reserved Assembly seats in Bihar, 75.80% were won by non-christian tribals as against 24.20% by the christian tribals. Among the five reserved Parliamentary seats again, 80% of them were won by the non-christian alone. It may be also mentioned that out of four district, having reserved seats, christian tribals won only from two of them, i.e. Santhal pargana and Ranchi while Singhbhum and Palamau could return only non-christian

tribal candidates in spite of having some christian tribal contestants. Similarly out of the five reserved Parliamentary seats in the state, only one, i.e. Khunti could return a christian tribal at the polls, whereas Rajmahal, Dumka, Singhbhum, Lohardaga could return only non christian candidates.

Coming to the percentages of the winning tribal candidates we find Santhals at the top who could bag 10 out of a total of 29 reserved Assembly seats constituting 34.48% while the second, third and fourth positions were scored by the Oraon, the Ho and the Munda candidates who could secure only 7, 6 and 5 seats constituting 24.14%, 20.69% and 17.24% respectively. In the Parliamentary reserved seats, again, the Santhal candidates stood at the top securing two out of a total of five Parliamentary seats constituting 40% while one each was scored by a Ho, a Munda and an Oraon candidates constituting 20% each of them.

Thus, ethnically, the significant points which emerged from this analysis is, that out of 29 tribal communities, 10 tribal communities participated in the leadership contest during the fourth General Election. Among these ten also, the four numerically dominant tribes, the Santhal, Oraon, Munda and Ho, were specially active. All these tribal communities except the Chirk Braik and Karmali belonged essentially to the settled agricultural type of culture, while the other two traditionally belonged to artisan tribal communities living in the villages of the dominant tribes. There were no contestants from among the shifting cultivators and the **nomadic hunter type of tribes.**

It is also evident that the unsuccessful candidates mainly belonged to such tribal communities which were either numerically smaller having a smaller network of social relationships in comparison to candidates from settled agricultural types.

As regards their political affiliations, the Congress is the obvious gainer with annexing almost half the seats, the remaining distributed, among the different parties—like newly formed Jharkhand, Jan Sangh and Independents etc. In view of prevailing defection by the elected legislators after the fourth General Election in which the tribal legislators have been greatly active, their party affiliations have become irrelevant for the present.

The most outstanding point in the tribal politics of Bihar, however, is the loss of monopoly of the christian tribals in winning most of the Assembly and Parliamentary seats which reflects the awareness on the part of the 90% non christian tribals to elect the non christian tribals as their leaders. It again marks implicitly the revival of the Hindu model among the tribals. This also reflects the stronger sense of identity with the major regional culture and a will for establishing regional identity in the wider frame of national integration.

Such a jolt to christian oriented leadership has obviously caused concern in the whole of christiandom. While they have lost at the Assembly and

Parliament levels, it seems that at the level of youths they want to revive the old phases of the Jharkhand movements. The different parts of Chotanagpur have witnessed several adivasi unrest in the colleges and in the university. The several youth organisations of the Adivasis, among them mention may be made of Birsa Dal, have become very active, and aggressive speeches and actions are being adhered to by the youths educated in colleges under the influence of the Missionaries.

The mid term election held recently confirms the above mentioned political trends noticed during the last general election. Except certain alteration in the strength of the different parties, the ethnic, religious, and regional pictures remain more or less the same. As regards party strength two distinct tribal parties—one Hul Jharkhand Party of mainly the Santhal legislators and the other Jharkhand Party of the christian legislators of Chotanagpur backed by a few Hindu Ho legislators—have emerged in the Bihar Legislative Assembly. Both these parties claim their affinity with the old A.I. Jharkhand Party and both claim the traditional cock, election symbol, which was so dear to the Adivasi electorate. Both these parties, again, suffer from intense internal bickerings and instead of serving the cause of their brethren, each legislator aspires a place in the Cabinet at any cost. The seats for Jan Sangh increased from 2 in 1967 to 7 in the Mid term election in Ranchi district. The popular votes polled in its favour also increased from 17.2% in 1967 to 33.2% in 1969 in Ranchi district which again reflects our contention about Hindu Model.

#### PATTERN OF RURAL LEADERSHIP IN TRIBAL BIHAR

While the tribal leadership at the regional and state level seems to be keeping pace with the modern democratic needs, the village leadership in the interior tribal areas continue to be mostly institutional, formal and hereditary. Even in the villages exposed to the influence of modernity the people wanted to refer to the non-traditional leaders showed a general tendency to indicate the names of such persons who were associated with some types of office or position of authority like Mukhia, Sarpanch, B.D.O. and the like. Whenever they are asked about their leaders they most frequently name the village Pahan, Pujar, Munda, Parha Raja and such other officials. As a matter of fact the concept of individual leader or *Konman* is very faintly developed and owing to this they do not have any appropriate equivalent term for 'leader' in the respective languages. Some vague terms like *Gonke* or *Mung Gonke* by the Munda, *Konha Alar* among the Oraon or *Marmat alar* in Nappania are, sometimes, used to indicate the dominant personality of their respective society who yield powerful influence in the decision making about the village or the community.

On the basis of two sets of schedule for locating the leaders in the ten

traditional and acculturated villages of the Oraon, the Munda, the Ho, the Santhal and the Maler, a set of 286 tribal leaders were located. Among them the number of leaders at the acculturated villages were greater (58.80%) in comparison to the traditional villages (41.20%). This trend was found in all the tribal areas except in the Ho where the number of leaders was almost equal in both the sets of villages. Except a few all the leaders named by the villagers belonged to the respective villages. These leaders belong to the age group 31 years and above (above 71%). However, persons below the age group of 30 years and below are also named as leaders in both the traditional (28.90%) and the acculturated villages (15.90%). Such leaders of lower age group belonged either to the village of the informants or to the neighbouring villages. This indicates that they are not willing to give the same confidence and privilege to young persons of low age group from outside the neighbouring villages.

From the point of view of ethnic affiliation in both the traditional and acculturated villages the percentage of the tribal leaders was greater (over 78%) than the non-tribal leaders. Among the acculturated villages, however, the numerical strength of the non-tribal leaders is greater than the traditional leaders. Such a situation has been caused first because the non-tribal group has acted as an agent of change in the village, and secondly the non-tribals operate comparatively on a wider network of social relations and, thus, are helpful to the tribals in satisfying their new and modern needs. Moreover the non-tribal leaders of both the traditional or acculturated villages happen to be somewhat more educated than their tribal counterpart. In declaring a non-tribal as their leader implicitly they take into consideration the factor of education as an essential criterion. They, however, give the least importance to education when they consider leaders from their tribal society.

If one takes an overall view of the relative priority of the leaders in terms of their functional diversification, out of the total number of leaders 69.10% of them had institutional affiliation of the traditional or the modern type. Even among them, 38.10% have affiliation with traditional institutions. Next in order comes the position of *Mahajan* (money lenders) who were declared leaders to the tune of 11.80%. Though, the mahajan are said to have exploited the tribals for a long time, they have been also helpful to them in the times of dire need, and always advise them in many matters. In view of these, especially among the Santhal and the Maler, the number of mahajans to be declared as leader was greater than among other tribals. The third set of persons designed as leaders is drawn from the modern institutional affiliations (10.20%) which include the offices like *Mukhia*, *up Mukhia*, *Sarpanch*, *Gram Sevak* and the like. The percentage of this category of leaders was obviously greater (75.87%) in the acculturated villages than the traditional set of villages (24.13%). This further confirms that the tribal villagers repose more confidence in the formal leaders, either traditional or modern. The fourth set of leaders includes the



village teachers, the B.D.O., V.L.W., clerks, (Inspectors), Priests and missionaries. This category of leaders (8.70%) is also associated with the modern institutions located near the village. A majority of them (64%) comes from a set of acculturated villages which once again substantiates the point made above that the villages exposed to the influence of modernity will have greater number of emergent leaders. The last category of leaders hails from the group of ex-landlord (0.60%). In spite of its insignificant percentage, it reminds us the legacy of the old age when the landlords in the tribal areas wielded tremendous influence on the life of the tribals and guided their destiny by providing leadership to them.

Finally when asked about the assistance received from different leaders it was noted that the tribals specially in the traditional set of villages do not name specific leader for specific occasions. They name rather the same set of traditional and institutional leaders like village religious priest, secular head, village elders to serve as multi-purposes similar responses were found in majority of cases.

#### ATTITUDE OF THE FOLLOWERS TOWARDS LEADERS

The leaders have been viewed from the followers point of view to the two villages of Kudra and Bhadauli in the Oraon area of Ranchi district. Both the villages located under Sisai police station, the first village Kudra represented traditional type of Oraon village while Bhadauli very close to the Block office, represents the acculturated type.

'Jharkhand' seems to be a household word among the tribals and irrespective of the traditional or acculturated village and educated or uneducated people it seems familiar to over 90% of the people of Kudra and Bhadauli. However only 21.05% and 28.57% of respondents of Kudra and Bhadauli desire a separate Jharkhand state and a majority of them, i.e. 63.2% and 51.49% respectively are not in a position to decide. Among those who replied in favour of Jharkhand cent per cent at Kudra thought its boundary to be whole of Chotanagpur while this sort of reply was obtained from only 11.11% people of Bhadauli, and 68.89% of the respondents of Bhadauli could not give any response to this question.

As regards their choice of political parties, in general, Jharkhand (42.5%), Congress (32.5%) and Jan Sangh (25.86%) figured prominently. The first choice fell on Jharkhand as it was considered to be a party for the welfare of the Adivasi. The Congress scored the second position as it was a majority party in Bihar. In a short time the Jan Sangh gained so much popularity owing to the recent revival of Sarna Dharan against christianity.

From the election study of the last general election it was also evident that the Jharkhand party and its symbol 'cock' have been very much rooted to the minds of the tribal people in several areas. There was a general lack of

enthusiasm among the tribal voters when they came to know about the ban of 'cock' as symbol, and many of them refused to vote to other symbols. The percentage of polling again was reduced to 25% to 35% in several areas as they did not like to vote for other symbols. The people considered it an act of betrayal on the part of the leaders who accepted the abolition of 'sacred' cock, which symbolised for them, 'the creative God and all pervading bonga'.

When asked about the effectiveness of the old Parha system 52% of the respondents of Kudra and Bhadauli consider it to be very effective while 5% and 8.7% respondents of the respective villages said that it was not at all effective. Those who said it was somewhat useful was 47.5% and 24.14% at both the villages respectively. Views expressed in response to this question indicated the declining influence of Parha at the acculturated village, Bhadauli.

A large percentage of the informants showed greater anxiety and concern for the decline in the power of the traditional panchayat specially at Kudra. When they were asked to show their preference, 62.5% of the informants of Kudra preferred to the traditional panchayat while only 50% informants at Bhadauli favoured the traditional Panchayat. When enquired about the political consciousness of the two villages, it was found that the tribals of the traditional village was totally ignorant about the names and party affiliation of Chief Minister, Bihar and Prime Minister of India. Some affirmative responses came only from tribal informants of Bhadauli and the non-tribal informants of both Kudra and Bhadauli. It seems that though the tribals and non-tribals living in same ecological and demographic setting, the non-tribals because of their wider social contacts are politically more conscious than their tribal co-villagers. The people in the tribal villages mostly remain unaware of the political events occurring at the country levels, and *this lack of communication is of deep concern.*

It is interesting to compare the above responses with those obtained in context with tribal leaders of *Illaka*, Chotanagpur and the whole of State, and in general, here the responses of the informants of the two villages were comparatively better. At Kudra 67.5% of the informants gave the names of about half a dozen of *Illaka* tribal leaders of their own areas though they were quite unable to name any tribal leader of Chotanagpur or of the state level. At the acculturated village Bhadauli, the percentage of the total number of respondents who named the tribal leaders of their *Illaka*, Chotanagpur and state levels were 75.80%, 20.60%, and 18.09% respectively. Here, also the general trend of the responses was similar to the responses in the previous set of questions concerning the non-tribal leaders. First, the responses of the educated informants whether tribal or non-tribals were always greater than their non-educated counterparts. It once again emphasises the role of education in making the people politically more conscious. Secondly, it also suggests that while an overwhelming majority (75.80%) of the people of Bhadauli were in a position to name the *Illaka* leaders, very smaller percentage of them

and in a descending order could name a few tribal leaders who operate on Chotanagpur and the state levels. Such responses have an important bearing in understanding the nature of interactions among rural, regional and state leadership. It also reflects the nature of their political consciousness and indicates the extent to which the village tribal leadership operates and to the extent it is divorced from the wider Chotanagpur or state politics.

Taken a wholistic view of tribal leadership at different levels of operation one notices the closer collaborations between the tribal and non-tribal leadership, both in the past and present. Such a situation in the sphere of leadership has been caused owing to symbiotic relationship and co-existence of the tribal and the non-tribal in the same area and in the same villages. Even several rebellions in the past were led by the non-tribal elites of the locality.

It is, however, also evident that certain areas of conflicts and differences have also continued between them, which unfortunately is widening owing to firstly, the spread of christianity and secondly owing to certain constitutional provisions (i.e. reserved constituencies). Indiscriminate provisions of privileges to the privileged section of the tribals have caused discontent not only among the non-tribal leaders of the area but also among certain section of the tribal leaders of the locality as well.

The gap between rural-bred, institutional, formal collective and tradition-oriented leadership, in the villages and urban-bred, western-educated, rational individualistic and non-institutional leadership in the urban centres is quite evident. In case of the christian villages this gap has been minimised owing to greater interactions between the rural and urban dwelling leaders, which could be possible because of the church network. Some tribal leaders of this region have realised the need to bring together the two sets of leadership and efforts have been made to reorganise their regional Panchayat (Parha, Parganait, Sardari, Manki etc.) to suit their modern political purposes. The rural-urban interactions are also being facilitated owing to the occasional visits of the tribal college students of the respective areas to the interior villages. The participation of village leaders and keymen with the tribal students in organising demonstrations and in observing Birsa Anniversary etc. in certain sub-divisional or thana towns is on increase, and it aims to bridge the gulf between two sets of leadership.

Though political consciousness even on the part of the village leaders is at low ebb, the demand for Jharkhand as a separate state is known to 90% of the villagers in most of the localities. 70% of them, however, do not understand its implications and are undecided about its creation. The concept of Jharkhand has become known to them owing to its association with cock as the symbol for election, which, obviously, has socio-religious and emotional association with the tribal style of life. The Jharkhand party, it seems, won many elections in the past owing to its symbol 'cock' which acted as magic stick for the tribal electorates.

The separatist and divisive forces which were released in the past by the Jharkhand Party and which sustained a setback for the time being is again on increase. The youth of Chotanagpur under the new set of leadership is in ferment. The national problems of unemployment, economic disparity, social disabilities and political manoeuvrings which need to be tackled at a broad base level are being attacked here in terms of ethnic and regional considerations. The recent acceleration of industrialization in Chotanagpur has also brought about discontentment among the educated youths who feel frustrated when they do not get employment in the industrial concern. The emerging industrial style of life in the midst of folk society of Chotanagpur have obviously caused gaps and the level of aspirations of the urbanised or semi-urbanised tribal communities have been increasing and have wider repercussion. In the light of the nature of these forces some measures for the purpose of removing regional imbalances and improving the prospect of national integration may be thought of.

First, it should be realised that, with the rest of India, the independence released forces of progress, resistance and dynamism in tribal areas as well, and the hill and tribal people felt attracted towards the same. Provisions in the Indian Constitution were made with the lofty objects to bridge the present socio-economic distance between them and the rest of their Indian population. At the moment, there is a rising political and cultural consciousness among them which is the result of the provisions laid down in our Constitution. They have begun to feel more deeply than ever before that they are less educated, less economically advanced, and in several instances, also less regarded with equally the same other sections of the population.

This state of affairs has to be corrected. It is to be recognised that if the tribals of the different areas and the people of the rest of the country are to constitute strong nation, the responsibility for integration does not lie with the tribals alone, rather it should be borne by the rest of the nation to a greater extent. There should be informed contacts and frank exchange of views, information and ideas among the leaders and laymen of the tribal areas, and those of the rest of the nation on multiple platform.<sup>11</sup>

At the economic level, a balanced economic development of all the sub-cultural regions be emphasised to remove inter-regional economic jealousies. Equality of opportunity in the economic sphere has also to be ensured. Moreover, the scope should be given even for the fulfilment of the political aspiration of aggrieved regions in a way which may not jeopardise regional balance and national unity.

At the psychological level again, efforts should be made for the rational, clarification of the regional stereotypes, domatic beliefs, ideas and 'half-truths'. Then, the inculcation of national symbols, collective image of India, common cultural norms through deliberate propaganda conducted by mass media and



voluntary agencies should be attempted in the tribal areas.

The socio-cultural solution lies in the realisation of the need for developing intra- and inter-regional understanding and mutual tolerance for each other's languages and way of life. The genius of Indian civilisation to co-exist in unity in spite of diversity, be given due consideration. However, they need not influence our political and economic inter-dependence at the national level.

Along with these economic, cultural and psychological solution the need for a strong centre is the first requisite in the absence of which the regional issues are bound to dominate and relegate the national issues to a secondary position. The economic and political grievances of the different regions should be given full attention and justice that is needed by a region be assured as a monolithic unity is bound to crumble. A political system and a constitution be ensured which will co-ordinate the needs of the nation and its regions in a manner which may lead to the development of the composite index of nationalism and national integration. The kind of nationalism needed should be overpowering enough to dominate over the negative aspects of infra-nationalism and sub-nationalism. But as aptly stated by Romesh Thaper, "the future is dependent largely on the degree to which the centre can assert itself not as a 'mix' of contradictory regional involvement, but as supreme arbiter of the national 'interests'. The leaders of the scheduled areas have also to play their rightful roles in this regard in the name of partiotism.<sup>12</sup>

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Problems of Integration





# Tribe in India: A Problem of Identification and Integration

K.S. MATHUR

Thanks to welfare department, Government in India, which is committed to treat equally all sections of the country's population (and treat with privilege those which have been social underdogs), not only administrators and anthropologists but the average English-knowing man in the street knows who are the people in India referred to as 'tribes' or its Hindi counterpart of the 'Adivasi'. The governmental publicity machinery in the past twenty years has successfully aroused the interest of the people in this section of the country's population.

Besides the commitments of a welfare state, developmental and strategic considerations have drawn the tribal people to the fore of the national front. The 'tribal areas' of the country happen to be the richest in resources—minerals, forest-produce, water power and labour. Many of them like Nagaland, Lushai Hills, and Tarai in U.P. and Bihar, are strategically located and have witnessed considerable activity particularly in the past six years since the Chinese aggression. Of course, the Naga, Mizo and Jharkhand problems have been with us for about two decades now. The entire set up in the country today makes it necessary for us to sit up and re-examine the very basic concept of tribe, which is the core of the problem.

Added to this is the administrative problem of the identification of tribes for purpose of scheduling and consequent grant of privileges guaranteed to the Scheduled Tribes under the Constitution. Well-meaningly, the constitution-framers guaranteed certain privileges to the Scheduled Tribals and Scheduled Castes in matters of representation, services, education, and so on. Before Independence the general tendency was for 'lowly' castes and tribes to make effort to elevate their social position and try to get recognition (formally from the government at the time of the decennial censuses) as 'upper' castes. During the Censuses of 1931 and 1941, there was a great deal of such activity. After 1947, the trend was checked and even reserved for the sake of the politico-economic privileges. The larger number of applications for scheduling entertained in the offices of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes are evidence of the desire on the part of the people to claim recognition as 'lowly' and 'down-trodden'.

We could pose the problem like this: are the 'tribal' people in India ethnically and culturally distinct from the rest of the population so as to deserve a distinct social category or is the gap between them and us a merely political gulf, which was created by the Imperial colonial power and which has widened in recent years after 1947? If they are found ethnically and culturally distinct from their non-tribal neighbours, the demands for distinctive treatment and even autonomy could be valid and would have to be sympathetically endorsed by the anthropologists. If not, we shall have to look out for the causes of discontent among them and, if possible, suggest a remedy.

Ethnologists have classified the tribes of India into four major groups: the tribes of NEFA and Eastern India belong to the Mongoloid ethnic stock, the tribes of Bihar and Orissa are Proto-Australoids, the tribes of Western and Central Himalayas are Mediterranean-Nordic, and the tribes of South India have strains of Australoid, Negroid and Alpine. What is significant in this connection is the fact that none of these constitutes a pocket by itself but shares the ethnic traits in some measure with its neighbouring non-tribal populations.

The officers of the Census of India before 1931 were emphatic about the religious distinction. They designated the tribals as 'animists', a term brought into currency by E.B. Taylor and used to indicate ghost cults in ancient and primitive societies. The implication was that tribals were animists and the non-tribals were not. The evidence provided by authorities on Indian folk religion like Baines, Risley and Crooke differed from such a conclusion; in 1931, J.H. Hutton added a note to this problem by demonstrating that tribal religions in India could be best understood as "raw material yet to be built into the temple of Hinduism". Obviously, this has reference to the age-old historical process in India by which the aboriginal tribes entered the universe of caste Hinduism without either a formal conversion or any significant change in the cultural religious life.

On the cultural and linguistic plane, the 'tribes' have never been markedly different from the neighbouring non-tribes. Ghurye's theory that the so-called 'aborigines' in India share the culture and language of the non-aboriginal Hindu rural communities of the respective regions they live in is shared and substantiated by field scholars like Majumdar and Aiyappan.

It looks as if these 'aboriginal' or 'tribe' people have all alone been living in harmonious co-existence with their more civilized neighbours. From time to time, groups from them moved out of their semi-isolation in more remote hills and jungles and entered plains, villages and the caste system, at their periphery. The large number of social reform movements among them, such as the Tana Bhagat movement among Oraon, are evidence of their desire to get absorbed in the Hindu caste system and Hindu civilization in a formal way. They used their 'tribal' names to identify themselves, like Gond, Santal, Korku, Kerwa, much in the same way as

castes identified themselves by their caste names and *vama* status. It is noteworthy that in India before it started absorbing western ideas and influences, there was no all-India consciousness of kind either among the caste Hindu or among the 'tribals', and perhaps for this reason, we do not possess traditional all-India categories for classifying and designating these groups.

Purely for the sake of classification and enumeration, the British Government in India introduced the category of 'tribe' (with occasional qualifying prefixes like 'hill and jungle', 'aboriginal', 'indigenous') to designate these people. The word 'tribe' had been hitherto used by European historians to refer to such distinctive groups of people as the Gauls or the Anglo-Saxons in Europe and such autonomous political groups as Lichchivi, Mulla, Yaudheya and Khasa in ancient India, or such wide descent groups as the tribes of Israel or the Arab tribes in Western Asia. Social anthropologists like Rivers were using the word in reference to the people of Melanesia where each hill top or valley sheltered groups of people who were politically autonomous and, as if to show that, were constantly at war with each other. It is significant to note that unaffected by its usage in India, British Social Anthropologists like Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, Fortes and Nadel have used the word 'tribe' to refer to an autonomous political unit which lives on its own territory and possesses its own distinctive way of life.

In the Indian context, efforts have been made to find common denominators if not a common definition of the word tribe. The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribals in his report for the year 1952 has listed eight such common features. These are: (i) They live away from the civilized world in the inaccessible parts lying in the forests and hills, (ii) They belong to either one of the three stocks—Negritos, Australoids of Mongoloids. (iii) They speak the same tribal dialect, (iv) Profess primitive religion known as "Animism" in which the worship of ghosts and spirits is the most important element, (v) Follow primitive occupations such as gleaning, hunting, and gathering of forest product, (vi) They are largely carnivorous or flesh and meat eaters, (vii) They live either naked or seminaked using tree-barks and leaves for clothing, and (viii) They have nomadic habits and love for drink and dance.

Desai in his comment on the above mentions that of the 25 million described as tribal people in India, only five million possess these features. Personally, I feel it is a typical case of fiction-creation by the government Officers. Perhaps in a romantic mood, exotic aspects of tribal culture were magnified and sought to be perpetuated, thus defeating the very objective the Constitution in providing the safeguards, viz., 'the levelling up of the tribes' [so that eventually they become integrated with the Indian population. Majumdar has categorically stated that with the exception of the tribes of Eastern India, everywhere ethnic strains have criss-crossed in the sub-continent.

"Waves of immigration have disturbed the ethnic structure of the Indian population and it is difficult to say with any degree of certainty what constitutes the race elements in any particular type, tribe or caste". For the rest it can only be said that perhaps with the exception of simple techno-economic culture, the tribes of India have nothing in common. Even the simplicity of technology and economy is a factor which was—and to some extent is—common to tribals and non-tribal rural communities.

The most important and conscious tribal groups in the country today, viz, the tribes of Assam, Nagaland and NEFA, and to a less extent the tribes of Chotanagpur in Bihar, in fact present an altogether different picture. Christianized Khasi, Mizo or Munda are heavily modernized, and many of them would rather consider their non-tribal neighbours as primitive.

In contemporary India, the word 'tribe' has thus little cultural or social implications. It has become the watchword of the political consciousness of a particular group of people in the country. Like caste consciousness, linguistic consciousness or regional consciousness, tribal consciousness is fast developing to be a political tool which has become symbolic of privileged treatment, separatist tendencies and in places a barrier to national integration.

As I said earlier, it was perhaps a well-meaning act on the part of our Constitution framers in 1947-49 to incorporate statutory guarantees of privileges to our backward castes and tribes. The principle no doubt was good. But the way it has been administered by the government and exploited by vested interests—both foreign and Indian—has led to the present situation of unrest in our tribal areas. On the one hand, we have failed to give to our 'tribal' brethren education, health and the basic necessities of comfortable existence. On the other, we have made them dependent upon doles which they have now come to regard as their birthright by virtue of their belonging to a community rather than because of their techno-economic backwardness. We have thus perpetuated a grave error made by the British Government and as such created a barrier to the integration of a significant section of the country's population.



# Tribals: An Assimilationist Society and National Integration

S.L. DOSHI

The enclaves of small, formerly semi-independent tribal populations in the plains and hilly regions of our country pose some special problems for national development. The problems of these 29 millions (6.8 per cent of the total population) are recognized in Article 46 of the Constitution which promises to promote 'with special care the educational and economic interests of Scheduled Tribes, and makes provision for protecting them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation'. The constitutional safeguards for tribals after having been adopted for about twenty years have recently been further extended. Here it is questionable whether some of the measures currently in vogue have solved or only aggravated the problems of tribal development. I propose to examine the effect of the working of the government policy in this regard having primarily this question in mind. My endeavour would be to assess and analyse the emerging tribal social structure on the current theoretical framework of culture dynamics and synthesis. In doing so I base my propositions on the available empirical researches in this behalf.

## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

With the attainment of independence it was realised by the national leaders and the masses of the people that in free India the tribals would not have a different fortune than the rest of the people in the country. The tribal policy of the government is thus a manifestation of the feelings of the general masses. The policy in operation today can be best understood in its true spirit when we study the debates of the Constituent Assembly along with historical perspectives which portray intergroup relations between the tribals and the rest of the people. The Sub-Committee with A.V. Thakkar as its Chairman, constituted by the Constituent Assembly to make proposals regarding minorities, was predominantly occupied by the humanitarian idiom of protecting the tribal economic interests, safeguarding their way of life and ensuring their development so 'that they might take their legitimate place in the general life of the country. The proposals were based on the past experience looking to the tribals' simplicity and weaknesses and their exploitation at the alien hands'. It was recommended by the Sub-Committee to provide statutory

safeguards for the protection of the land which is the mainstay of the aboriginals' economic life and for protecting their customs and institutions, which possess elements of value. The proposals of the Sub Committee contain the seminal ingredients of our official tribal policy. The Constituent Assembly released unanimously that the tribal advancement was an integral part of the development of the Indian people as a whole.

The constitutional safeguards when analysed, convey the concern of the government in regard to the Scheduled Tribes in terms of their educational and economic betterment, their protection from social injustice, and exploitation as found in various manifestations of discrimination and prejudices; and development of their general way of life. The creation of Scheduled and Tribal areas, preference in admission to educational institutions and public services, are some of the mechanisms which tend to fulfil the objects of the Constitution in letters and spirit. Occasional statements of the Prime Minister and the reports of the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and other Commissions further ensure implementation of the tribal policy. The programme in pursuance of the policy enunciated above safely leads to an approach which could be termed assimilation of the tribals with the rest of the society.

By and large the Indian tribes are an assimilationist society inasmuch as both the tribals and the non-tribals accept the idea of the assimilation of the former into the wider Indian community. The problem before us, therefore, is to examine the present trends in integration of the tribals in the Institutional orders of the Indian society and in the light of this integration, to assess the trends in respect of national integration; to suggest remedial measures for removal of the disfunctional traits from among the tribals for achievement of the national goal, and if the level of integration has already been achieved, to examine the dangers arising out of government policy of continuing the special status in various spheres of life granted to the tribals for achieving the above goals.

#### FRAME OF REFERENCE

The axis of tribal development is their ultimate integration in the main stream of national life. The frame of reference for the analysis of the tribal life in India is, therefore, integration—both social and cultural. It is the resultant process of assimilation, the latter being characterised by 'decreasing differentiation between individuals and between groups as well as by increased unity of action, attitude, and mental processes with respect to common interests of goals'. But then, integration should not be confused with homogeneity. It is 'organization, rather than homogeneity. A group is said to be integrated in the degree to which its members, its social categories and statutes, and its culture are organized for the achievement of common purposes or goals'.<sup>2</sup>

With this conceptualization of integration in mind when we examine the Indian scene, it seems that a number of our legislators misinterpret uniformity for unity. We assess the tribal problem strictly in view of the scientific connotation of the concepts 'assimilation' and 'integration'.

In the theoretical perspective, the culture of a group is both ethno-historical and functional. Epistemologically, 'culture comprises an historically acquired actual ideal forms of behaviour, feeling and thought of members of society, as well as the products of these processes, such as artifacts, sociifacts, mentifacts and agrofifacts'.<sup>3</sup> In the process of culture integration all the aspects of a culture are not assimilated by the alien culture. There emerges a level of integration wherein some of the aspects of the plurality of cultures are integrated. Each culture has its distinctive logical-aesthetic pattern consisting of complementary interests and values. A kind of teleofunctional integration of culture designed with the spirit of harmonization of polar, complementary interests and values can provide both the means and the ends of social being. This has to be done keeping in view the newly emergent cultural institutions and processes, for 'every real or existential culture is an eclectic combination of traditional elements and emergent forms, what varies is the proposition of the old and the new and the effectiveness of the role of rational thought in co-ordinating them'.<sup>4</sup>

The process of culture integration, on theoretical plane tends to give two types of crises, namely, existential and exiological. The occupants of culture are faced with the problem of the preservation of their social existence and the transformations in the form of system of values. The situation seems to be anormally difficult. In a developing society where there is emergence of new institutional orders along with their goals or ends and the instrumentality of means or norms the chances of various structures falling to an anomic situations, are not, out of question.

The theoretical frame of reference discussed in the foregoing section, helps us better to assess the process of tribal culture integration in the Indian scene. We propose to discuss this cultural transformation on the model of Wirth<sup>5</sup> who distinguishes four types of societies, namely, pluralistic in which a minority desires existence side by side with the majority and other minorities; secondly, assimilation is 'in which a minority desires absorption in the dominant group' and the majority accepts the idea, 'thirdly, secessionist wherein a minority seeks both cultural and political independence, and finally, militant in which a minority goes beyond the desire for equality and seeks domination. Thus, for instance, the Christians in India form a pluralistic society, the tribal of Central Zone are an assimilationist society, and the Nagas constitute a secessionist society.

The Central Zone includes the States of West Bengal, Bihar, Southern Uttar Pradesh, Southern Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Northern Bombay and Orissa.<sup>6</sup> The tribes of this zone have linguistic affinities with the Austric

family of languages, though important tribes like the Oraon and the Kolam, the Khond and the Gond speak languages having a Dravidian affinity".<sup>7</sup> We call the tribals of this zone as an assimilationist society because their economic, political, and linguistic assimilation in the rest of the society seems to have been almost completed and there is a satisfactory progress in the religious sphere from animism to Hinduism with their ultimate absorption in the Hindu society; and there remains only cultural variation in the institution orders of family kinship. The other modes of psychological, phenomenological and mythological integration also seem to near-won-over.

#### ASSUMPTIONS

The integration of assimilationist society, on Indian scene, presupposes some basic assumptions. First, no uniform policy of tribal cultural integration can be followed on all the tribals of the country. For, the tribals in the country are at various stages of development ranging from food gathering to market economy,<sup>8</sup> or for instance, tribals living in compact villages to those living in scattered ones. It thus warrants the designing of different schemes of development for the tribals of varying strata. Second, the tribal culture, like any other, is an organic whole wherein the different culture elements are integrated in the sense that the elements are interdependent.<sup>9</sup> Change functionally integrated in the sense that the elements are functionally in one element mechanically means change in other parts of the culture. This requires a harmonization or blending of different elements. Third, the axiological factors have a predominance over the existential ones. With these assumptions in mind we proceed to assess the level of integration achieved as a result of the working of official tribal policy. Such an attempt would help us to bring out the consequences of the development processes.

#### ECONOMIC STRUCTURE

For a very long period of history the Scheduled Tribes lived on bare subsistence economy. As a result of economic protection given to them and the working of the Five-Year Plans the tribals are gradually but surely drawn into the wider economic framework of the country. This results in their economic integration. The tribal economic integration, however, does not mean that they have attained the general per capita level of income. Actually, integration implies that the tribals have shown their acceptance to the broader economic policies of the nation state. They might still continue to remain a little not well-off from the general standard but their involvement in the market economy definitely shows symptoms of economic integration. This can be viewed with reference to the institutional patterns referred to as property, occupation contract and money.



The Constitution gives fundamental right to own private property and this applies to all the citizens of the country. The Scheduled Tribes are bestowed with additional right of property, for their ownership to land is not transferable. This legal protection is vested in all the categories of Scheduled Tribes. Similarly, they have a right to profess any occupation like other citizens of the country. Occupation for the tribals, therefore, is achievement—oriented rather than ascription. In the sphere of economic enhancement, the tribals are gradually giving up the *Jajmani* system and are being drawn in a market economy. The contract system—an agreement involving an exchange, is equally applicable to the Scheduled Tribes. Government loans and the loans taken from the traders are subjected to legal contract. The working of co-operatives among the tribals also deals vigorously on contract basis. This sanctioned pattern of contract involves the tribals in the pattern-maintenance of the economic system of the country.

Prior to the operation of national economy the motivation behind the tribal economic activities was only meagre subsistence to the extent of keeping by body and soul together. This could have been done by hunting, food-gathering or shifting cultivation. But the new economic policy has provided the tribals with a motivation—a definite purpose of action charged with developmental emotions or sentiments. They newly released norms and values of growing more food with skilled and advanced techniques of cultivation, are being gradually working as motivational spring boards for the tribals.

The above generalizations regarding the economic integration of tribals are too broad indeed. This prompts us immediately to refer to some specific data which may tell the exact trends of tribal economic integration.

Among the most important indications of the status and power of a group is its place in the economic structure. The new economy is based on increased farm products including commercial ones and the industrial output. The central tribal zone that we have taken for our reference here includes among other tribes the Santhal, Hos, Kols, Bhils, Gonds, Oraons and the Konds. We have called these groups of Scheduled Tribes as an assimilationist society. These tribals have been subjected to a continuous extension of their economic frontier to the national economic terminus. F.G. Bailey writing about the Konds of Bisipara (Orissa) reports that the tribe has taken to market economy and grows commercial crops such as turmeric and oil-seeds which are not grown by the caste Oriyas.<sup>10</sup> Bisipara has received modern economy in the form of a traders' frontier. Concluding the economic integrative trends of the Konds, Bailey observes: 'this, in brief, is the effect on agriculture of the traders' frontier, which, in Bisipara, represents the modern economy of India and the world'.<sup>11</sup>

Quite like the agrarian society of the country, agriculture occupies a central place in the economic activity of the tribal people. According to the

census of 1961, 68.15 per cent of tribals work as cultivators, 19.73 as agricultural labourers, and 3.42 labourers in mining and forestry, etc., the remaining being occupied in other services.

The Santhals who in 1868 were hostile to caste Hindus and only tolerated the blacksmith, have now taken to cultivation on the pattern of caste Hindus and they "have during the past been developing and altering, at the present time they are in a transitory stage".<sup>12</sup> The Santhals, therefore, had begun on the journey to economic integration about four decades back. The Hos, as Ghurye informs us, have mooted the modern problem and resolved upon a solution to it.<sup>13</sup> In the same vein Majumdar and Madan talk about the revolution which has taken place among the Hos as a result of the introduction of money economy.<sup>14</sup> Griffiths bestows all appreciation on the Kols "who accommodate themselves better to the modern economic world than the Gonds, and that they are bad mixers; nor are they limited to particular occupation".<sup>15</sup> The Gonds of Madhya Pradesh once known for sacrificing and eating bullocks<sup>16</sup> have taken to new methods of sowing paddy and that they have not only taken to cotton cultivation and adopted improved methods of farming but are also rearing cattle.<sup>17</sup> The Oraons of Chotanagpur, as S.C. Roy describes them, centre round their agriculture. They now grow cotton and their women hand-spin it.<sup>18</sup> The Bhils of Rajasthan and Gujarat among whom I had the opportunity to carry out field work have successfully taken to skilled agriculture. They grow commercial crops such as tobacco, cotton and ground-nut.

The point that I want to make is that the tribals of Central zone have taken to agriculture as a main source of livelihood. The method of cultivation and irrigation is similar to that practiced in the non-tribal villages of India. The forces of modernization released at the hands of Community Development Blocks, Tribal Blocks, and communication links have created a congenial situation in which the tribals are confidently responding positively to improved seeds, chemical fertilizers, improved cattle, pump-ing sets, and commercial crops. This obviously is a positive step towards tribal integration in the wider economic system.

There are, however, some new processes found operating among the tribals. In our country higher status and power are assigned to white-collar jobs where manual labour is at its minimum. The tribals who have received a little education—technical or liberal have chosen to go in for these white-collar jobs. The white-collar jobs being limited and increasingly scarce, the tribals have taken to political life the opportunities for which are simply available with the introduction of Panchayati-Raj. White-collar opportunities made available to the Scheduled Tribes on all India basis in the Central Government services for the years 1959 to 1967, in the categories of Class I, II, III and IV (excluding sweepers) is given in the following Table:

TABLE 1. Progressive Representation of Scheduled Tribes in Central Government for the Years 1959-67

Year	Total No. of employees	Scheduled Tribes	Percentage
1959	17,75,080	30,518	1.71
1960	18,38,928	35,652	1.90
1961	18,66,936	37,704	2.02
1962	19,09,262	38,708	2.02
1963	21,18,599	43,532	2.05
1964	33,06,875	47,377	2.15
1965	23,10,630	51,039	2.21
1966	23,44,960	52,655	2.24
1967	23,57,782	55,178	2.24

Source: *A Statistical Handbook of Tribal Welfare and Development*, Government of India, Department of Social Welfare, 1968, pp. 89-90.

The participation of tribals in business, wholesaling and manufacturing is almost absent. A few of them have taken to industrial labour, and farm labour such as in the big plants and tea gardens. Nevertheless, it may safely be said that the tribals have never been compelled to take up low occupations such as weaving and sweeping in the factory.

The tribals of Central Zone, despite their achievement in the sphere of economy, their rising standard of living are faced with some economic problems such as the land-hunger, adequate money-lending facilities and job-opportunities for those who are educated. But then, these are problems which are not particular to the tribals but are characteristic of the agrarian society and the educated unemployed class. This, however, does not mean that the tribal economic integration is at the lowest level. In point of fact, the society is fully equipped with an assimilational atmosphere in which their emotions and sentiments are charged with the economic goals of development.

#### POLITICAL STRUCTURE

Since the attainment of independence, the tribals have become part and parcel of the general political system of the county. They are the citizens of the nation and are subjected to the Constitution and the legal code.<sup>19</sup> Indian Constitution carries a whole array of political and social life and this is being implemented through modern technology and administration.

Bailey interprets the political system of Bisipara in terms of a person's membership of the village and his being a citizen of India. He considers the village as an *imperium* in which 'the social roles of the administrators and the men of the village do not overlap. Even caste is irrelevant'.<sup>20</sup>

The tribal councils which used to be all powerful in directing the behaviour

of its members are now soon weakening, for the administration has abrogated the right of the tribal council to sit in judgement or criminal cases. The nyaya panchayats have taken over the judgement of ordinary civil cases in its hands. This has reduced the dominance of tribal or clan councils.

The four general elections and the reservation of seats in Vidhan Sabha and Sansad have created a political awakening among the tribes. Participation in election campaigns and contact with party bosses tend to create frequent inter-group interactions and maneuvering. The introduction of Panchayat Raj has further offered opportunity for an increased involvement of tribals in the political activities. The tribal village like any other village is embraced with its national political system. The first tier of the Panchayat is linked with the Zila Parishad, the State and the Centre. This appears to be a successful political integration of the tribals, albeit it may be said that the tribal leaders at various levels of party and government have not delivered goods to satisfaction. Nevertheless, the elections in Panchayat Raj hardly go uncontested and the tribals leave no opportunity for the acquisition of power at Panchayat or Samiti level. This is a clear indication of the pervasive spirit of politicization found among the tribals. Effective tribal leadership largely depends on the educational and social development of the tribals.

#### SOCIAL STRUCTURE

Yet another structural level where tribal integration seems to be successful is the area of social life. The tribals have benefited largely from the scholarships and the hostel facilities for prosecuting higher education. This is event from the increasing number of scholarships given by the government. The expenditure incurred on the award of post-metric scholarships was Rs. 83,80,622 in 1966-67.<sup>21</sup> Tribal students are increasingly taking admission to technical and liberal courses of education. Strikingly enough, there is no separate educational system for the tribals. They are exposed to the same system which is sufficient enough to bring the tribals in vital national fold.

The tribal family pattern in the Central Zone is polygamous, at least theoretically. But the process of modernization has tended to give a monogamous form of family. The Bhils of Rajasthan have a tremendous desire to go for a monogamous family pattern and the practice of polygamy is looked at with contempt. Most of the tribals of our reference who had done without Brahmins in the past now try to secure their services on occasions of birth, marriage and death. There is a tendency to abandon divorce and to replace bride-price by dowry.

The tribals have tried to emulate the symbols, values and norms of the groups which surround them. They have acquired an urge for prestige and this has brought about changes of magnitude in their dress pattern, diet and social practices of various kinds. Such an internationalization made by the tribals



has a cohesive effect. 'It tends to pull down the walls which in the past segregated the different sections of society.'<sup>22</sup>

### RITUAL STRUCTURE

The 19th century intellectuals of Europe who were confronted with the problem of the crises in their age resorted to moral norms which, to them, could reconstruct the society. It is in this context that Emile Durkhiem talked to *collective conscience* in the primitive society and the *moral density* in advanced one for creating integration in the segmentary social structures.<sup>23</sup> On theoretical perspective this has a bearing on the integration of tribals at the religious plane in India. Religion correspondingly changes the social structure. The secular character of the Indian nation-state can hardly initiate matters in this

TABLE 2. Religion of Scheduled Tribes (1961 Census)

Tribal Group	Persons	Christians	Hindus
Rural	29,107	1,562	26,078
Urban	772	92	632
Total	29,879	1,654	26,710

Source. *A Statistical Handbook of Tribal Welfare and Development*, op. cit., p. 66.

area but as a result of communication and increasing contacts the tribals, a large majority among them have taken to Hinduism, the other religion being accepted is Christianity. The religion of Scheduled Tribes as given in 1961 census is as under:

Writing about the Hos of Singhbhum, Majumdar informs that the tribe is definitely inclined to Hinduism and it has begun to observe Hindu holidays and festivals,<sup>24</sup> though there are some rituals which put the Hos to animism. There have been messianic movements among the Hos which have worked to check the inroads of Hindu and Christian cultures.<sup>25</sup> The Santhals seem to have come nearer to the Brahminical culture.<sup>26</sup> Similarly, the Kols recognize the deities of the lower caste Hindus. The Bhils burn the dead body, the cremation ground being anywhere near a shrine or a tank. The Gonds bury their dead, though they recognize the ordinary village deities of lower castes. There have been reform movements among the Gonds which indicate their religious integration with the Hindus. "The ideal which the modern Gond leaders aim at is the ethical standard as envisaged and propagated by Hinduism, a Hinduism in its old and most orthodox form".<sup>27</sup> As a traditional practice, the Konds bury the dead though cremation seems to be on increase.

The tribal fasts and festivals are usually associated with their locality.

Ancestor and nature appear to be a popular form of worship among the tribals of the Central Zone. The trends of conversion have two directions—Hinduism and Christianity. The consequences of these conversions are discussed in the concluding section of the paper.

#### LINGUISTIC AFFINITIES

In the Central Zone there are languages of two families—Austrie and Dravidian, the former being dominant. On the integrative perspective it may be said that the contacts with government personnel, contractors, traders, etc., have all affected the language of the tribals. Hindustani or the regional dialects, in the situation of increasing communication links, are gradually being taken up as means of interaction. Language in this respect serves as a strong medium of tribal integration.

#### EMERGING SITUATION: CONSEQUENCES OF GOVERNMENT POLICY

At the outset, I started with the proposition that the tribals of Central Zone are an assimilationist society, for they have shown willingness to come in the fold of national culture. Our assessment of the whole situation shows that the tribals of this zone have more or less been integrated in the broader economic, political, social, religious and lingual system of the country, though it is not without disfunctional consequences in some spheres of national life. Looking to these fissiparous trends there seems to be reason-able ground to reconsider our official tribal policy. We insist on reconsider-ation because there are dangers involved if we go ahead with the same approach of social security measures.

An assimilationist society when fed with an over dose of integration gets suspicious of the dominant group and in course of time seeks for both its cultural and political independence. The official policy in our country has allowed as a friendlier gesture the existence of the plurality of tribal cultures. The party in power has made compromises and leaders of the rank have preached for the tribals "to develop along the lines of their own genius. We should avoid imposing anything on them. We should encourage their traditional arts and culture".<sup>28</sup> This is precisely eclecticism in our policy. When such a type of friendly plural existence is given to tribal culture, in any event of frustration it may develop a movement dedicated to complete independence. There are indications of emergence of secessionist society. In extreme cases it may take the shape of a militant society such as that of eastern border tribes. We have to be cautious of the emerging situation.

The level of integration that we have achieved so far seems to be satisfactory. At the existential level the tribals of our study have reached a stage

where they are soon to lose their social identity or distinctness. What is peculiar in a Bhil to a caste Hindu? Perhaps nothing and this resolves the existential crisis. In the exiological premise, the national values, norms and goals have come to near acceptance by the tribals. The problem of tribals in terms of legal safeguards seem to have been solved. The mountain is scaled. But the extension of safeguards for another period of ten years make us serious to look to the bitter consequences of some of our measures.

The reservation of seats in the Panchayati Raj and the Assembly and Parliament has tended to serve in favour of the dominant party. Actually at the time of Constituent Assembly debates such a fear was expressed by some members. One of the members rejected the reservation provision and said that the person belonging to the group of reservation might be a person whom the majority community backs. 'Perhaps that man may be a man liked by the majority under the guise of belonging to the minority community'.<sup>29</sup>

The government policy of creating separate hostels and rehabilitation colonies for the tribals has also resulted in creating a separatist tendency among the tribals. The tribals seem to have learnt the technique of factional politics and by creating parties such as Jharkhand they have raised demands for separate states or localities. Actually the creation of Nagaland—a compromise made by the Congress Party—is the result of this tendency of tribalism. Recently one of the Bhil members of Rajasthan Assembly threatened to stand for the demand a separate State for the Bhils of Rajasthan—the State to be termed Bhil Pradesh.

The economic benefits advanced by the government have rendered the tribals dependent instead of being self-reliant. If the present policy based on faulty assumptions is carried further, the integration of tribals is fraught with the danger of being dommed altogether. There are positive signals of the stepping up of secessionist society—a society emerging from the peace-loving assimilationist one. The problem, therefore, is to redefine the whole tribal situation in the context of the above emerging consequences.

#### THE NEW APPROACH

The socio-cultural situations that existed at the time of the formation of tribal policy do not remain the same today. Changes of magnitude have occurred. The policy that we have been pursuing is highly characterized by humanitarian spirit of social security. It seems to have served out its purpose. Looking to the present trends of transformation found among the tribals, the policy seems to be outdated. The postulate of culture integration that we proposed at the outset, that is, teleofunctional integration, takes into consideration the historical continuity of Indian character and culture; it brings a proportionate convergence in the traditional elements of the socio-cultural differences and the emergent forms of institutional framework. The axis of our efforts is the

general welfare of the masses. In achieving this goal, the tribal man power should be organized on a rational base keeping aside the political and other vested interests. This being the core of our new tribal approach we discuss to seek out a paradigm of teleofunctional integration. This is just a hypothetical consideration which requires vigorous analysis and testing in empirical reality.

In the present tribal situation we pose the question: What do the tribals expect today from the society? Surely their welfare which is not other than the general welfare of the society. Three alternative paradigms might be discussed in this respect. A section of students of tribal integration may plead for bridging the social distance that we find between the tribals and the rest of the society. Even if there is similarity in the social structures of different groups, this similarity does not bring about social equality. The American white and the negro are similar to one another in regard to their social structure but is not the social distance between the two groups very great? This obviously aggravates the negro-white relationships. Such an approach interprets the official policy in terms of social distance without bringing about any significant change in the old policy. If the policy is redesigned in tune with the perspectives of social distance, perhaps it may serve some purpose of the party in power. Such an approach may further be abandoned on the argument that in view of the basic tenets of the functional theory of stratification, it is well nigh impossible for any society to reach a stage of equality in social-roles. The approach is utopian for the literature of "social-scales" carried out in advanced countries indicates that social differentiation remains to a degree in all the socio-cultural groups. It will be ridiculous to think in terms of establishing matrimonial relations between the tribal and the High Caste Hindus. In the caste system itself despite our efforts of decades the inter-caste marriage remains infrequent. Our present official policy both in its seminal and present content hardly conveys the spirit of removing social distance. It does stand for the removal of social discrimination. That purpose is served. And the romantic approach of social distance, now, no more stands any justification.

An second approach may be to allow some of the safeguards, which have not proved to result in dysfunctional consequences, to the tribals. For instance, the enactments of tenancy, land acquisition, and forestry may continue. This may be done after a thorough probe in the whole situation. The safeguards which the tribals should not have any more, in this case, should be withdrawn. Such an approach would alight the over dose of integration and would check the emergence of secessionist society.

Yet another approach which may be called extremist would be to despecify the Scheduled Tribes and treat them at par with the agrarian society which, too, is confronted with similar problems. The argument advanced for the acceptance of this policy is based on the ground that the overflow of economic aid and the preferences in service and education have resulted in bitter consequences—encouraged separatist tendency and in view of all this de-



specification seems to be the only remedy.

The approaches as discussed above are not without limitations. The emergent tribal situation warrants an immediate solution. The situation is plain but the remedy is not yet clear. In view of the assessment made in the foregoing section of the paper it may be proposed for consideration that a uniform policy for tribals of all the zones may better be abandoned. The tribals of a region have their own problems, they have their own ethno-historical continuity and they cannot be subjected to a blanket policy of all India tribal level.

The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes should examine the level of integration reached by different tribes in different states and de-specify those tribes which in the opinion of the Commissioner are suffering from mere economic backwardness like any other people and include them in the first instance in the schedule of backward class.

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4. *Ibid.*, p. 399.
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6. Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, T.N., *An Introduction to Social Anthropology*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1956, p. 253.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 255.
8. There is much controversy about the different cultural levels of the tribes, for instance, Varrier Elwin classified them into four categories; Majumdar, D.N. and Madan, T.N., into three, and the Indian Conference of Social Work (1952) at the suggestion of its Tribal Welfare Committee, into four. Despite variation in the typology of tribal cultural levels, there seems to be an agreement on the point that all the tribals are not at one point of development. The variation appears to be significant.
9. Both the ethnohistorical and superorganic concepts of culture accept culture as an organicism. Nineteenth century 'evolutionalism' of culture as a "superorganic" entity and the current approach of functionalism ascribe this teleofunctional status to culture. The part of a culture is related to the whole.
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11. *Ibid.*, p. 246.
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17. Indrajit Singh, *Gondwana and the Gonds*, 1944, pp. 160, 168-70.
18. Roy, S.C., *The Oraons of Chotanagpur*, 1912, p. 105.

19. The tribals are given legal equality in terms of uniform application of Indian Penal Code. In addition to the general enactments, they are provided with some statutory safeguards. For instance, the Tenancy Act and the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 put the tribals to a premium. In the major aspects of life the tribals are controlled by the legal structure of the country.
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29. In my own district of Banswara in South Rajasthan—a Scheduled area—in the first election all the seats were returned in favour of the Socialist party. In the following three elections the Party could not return a single member. Similarly, out of the 8 Samitis of the district seven are occupied by the Bhil Pradhans. But the Zila Pramukh is a non-tribal. The vested interests seem to reap the harvest of reservation.

# Problems of Re-adjustment to a New Situation (With Special Reference to the Naga Tribes)

M. ALEMCHIBA AO

Irrespective of the different political systems, levels of technology and economy, religious and cultural affiliations, we find today a general restlessness taking place among the hill people of the entire North-East of India. They are passing through a period of transition in their history, and in the process they are faced with a problem of re-adjustment to the new situation.

For centuries, these tribesmen were isolated in the hills, living completely independent and often with almost entirely self-contained economics, where unmolested they went through their narrow round of life, knowing practically no variation from generation to generation. In course of time contact with civilization came about in two ways: by the visits of the tribesmen to the plains lying along the base of the hills, and by the penetration of foreigners into the hills. The latter was the more important. Foreigners residing in the hills influenced the culture and mode of life of the indigenous inhabitants in numerous ways—by medical work, by missionary propaganda, by display of a culture in some way regarded as higher, by objects of trade imported, by administration and the improvement of communication, by the presence of an armed force strong enough to suppress any rising or inter-tribal war. The adaptability of foreigners to the local situation has countless subtle influences that reacted on the mentality of the simple villagers who had an innate tendency to imitate foreigners usually to the detriment of their pride in their customs and history. Naturally tribesmen were attracted to those foreigners and a sense of affection and understanding developed gradually. The quality of adaptability of the foreigners to the local situation was a tremendous factor in winning the hearts of the tribesmen, who took in good faith any new measure taken by them for establishment of an ordered administration.

On the contrary, regular contact between the hillmen coming down for trade failed to establish a cordial relationship with the plainsmen, mainly those few Assamese and tea labourers settled along the hill borders. When the tribesmen came down to the plains they felt as if they had reached a

foreign country and came back home with many stories and experiences to tell their folks in the hills. Their knowledge of the people of India then was limited only to those few people of the plains who were also illiterate and showed an indifferent attitude. They never knew that India is a vast country where people of different races, cultures and religions lived together in harmony. Their understanding of the people of Assam or India in those days was, therefore, limited to the few neighbouring people in the plains.

No doubt, there were strong friendships between some hillmen and the plainsmen, but these were only stray cases and regarded as individual affairs rather than any general relationship. Often visitors from the hills were not allowed to take shelter against the rain and storm by the plainsmen in their shed even outside the house. Sometimes their routes were blocked. It was an impossibility to expect a glass of water from them. In short, the tribesmen were treated generally as "untouchables". There was no systematic recruitment of hillmen for work in the plains; gangs went down in the cold weather to work on tea gardens in order to earn cash for their house tax. Gangs going year after year to the same garden were paid regularly and well, but those working for petty contractors were cheated of their earning with regrettable frequency. They could not bring suits in the plains—the expenses, the distance and the endless adjournments were all against them.

The introduction of a first monetary medium of exchange had also tended to alter indigenous standards of wealth and to shift, to some extent, the enjoyment of wealth from those with plenty of land and paddy to those in receipt of earnings in cash in those days.

A moneyless economy worked well enough with a clan system of society, in which the various households depended upon their own efforts to supply their primary needs and the undue ascendancy of any particular family of person was more or less automatically barred by the difficulty of amassing wealth when wealth consisted in the direct produce of labour in the fields and in the herding of cattle. Any economic surplus was distributed, more often than not in the form of public entertainment being by its very nature extremely perishable as well as bulky, it could not therefore be accumulated in very great quantity. An economy based on a cash currency, on the other hand, afforded an immediate opportunities to individuals to amass personal fortunes and for a few to collect into their hands the means of production formerly distributed between many, and the persons who succeeded in snatching this opportunity were often those with no hereditary responsibility for the welfare of their kinsmen or fellow villagers. The introduction of a new economy thus entailed certain change in the social organisation causing social and economic disturbances particularly during the later part of the 19th century.

The British Government of India, were contented so long as the tribesmen remained in isolation, conducting their own affairs according to their



own law and customs, it presented no problems except that required to prevent raid or other forms of aggression on more civilised or less warlike neighbours. For this purpose a military occupation of territory was necessary and a loose system of political control or administration of some sort which did not involve more than a minimum of interference with tribal customs and the expense on which, if greater as it normally was than any revenue yielded by such an area, was in the nature of insurance. Where communication was meagre or non-existent contact with the outer world was so slow that the effect of its impact was beyond observation and no change took place in their community except gradual adaptation and alteration resulting from the intercourse on the fringes of the area inhabited. Progress of this kind involving a very slow change of environment and outlook were perhaps familiar throughout the tribal world of India. No serious problem arose until this process of slow adaptation was interfered with by a development of communication and a sudden increase of contacts.

Britishers knew that on the preservation of customs developed exactly to fit the environment and tested by centuries of use depended upon the whole fabric of the tribal society. But, while they took great pains to preserve them to the utmost limit possible and to ensure that such change as would inevitably come should not be destructive in its suddenness, they failed to appreciate the economic requirements of the hill people and neglected them. In strong contrast had been the attitude of the Christian Mission, particularly the American Baptists. As religion played a part in every Naga ceremony and as that religion was not Christianity, they felt every ceremony should be abolished. Such ceremonies as the great Feasts of Merit, at which the religious aspect was far less important than the social, had not been remodelled on Christian lines, but had been utterly abolished among converts. The tendency was to abolish abruptly the old thing and substitute individualism for the strong community feeling which had enabled the tribes to survive for so long. Not only was this individualism wrapped up with strong emphasis on personal salvation, it induced a direct and natural reaction against all the old things that mattered in the village life and social genius of the tribe. The result was a conflict not necessarily a conflict of arms but of culture, a conflict between the interest of community and individual which caused cultural tension in the society.

The hillmen for some reason or other had a fear of exploitation by the people of the plains. It had been a common experience of the hillmen in the past to be cheated in some way or other by shopkeepers and contractors in the plains. These had taken advantage of the intricacies and delays of the civil procedure in regulation courts to evade payments due to the tribesmen, who were unable to remain in the plains in order to sue there and not entitled, under the then existing codes, to sue in their own district for claims arising outside it. This circumstance caused the hillmen to believe that if they had

an administrative staff of their own kith and kin in their own land, the problem would be solved. They had an intense pride of race and a love of liberty and independence and thus they were anxious to ensure at least a measure of home rule.

Such were the circumstances then prevailing, when the Second World War broke out and the Japanese invasion came right up to Naga Hills in 1944. In the war they had much wider experience of strangers coming in large numbers, some friendly, as many other hostiles. In either case his way of life, hitherto almost untouched by any but the most transient of outside influences, had to be subordinated entirely for the time being to the exigencies of military necessity. There had not only been a temporary influx of strangers in large numbers, but communication with the outside world had been greatly increased as a result of military needs.

The regular contacts that had existed between Naga Hills and the bordering plains had extended to the rest of Assam and beyond it and thus introduced new needs into Naga life and to some extent modified the daily round. The Naga tribes could not avoid considering their position in regard to external affairs which hitherto had affected them but very remotely. They conceived of themselves as part of a larger whole, which had mostly been regarded as something alien and separate, and with the affairs of which they had little concern. Indeed, one effect of the Japanese invasion had been to give the Nagas a sense of partnership with all enemies of the Japanese in a spirit of collaboration to put an end to a common mischief.

All through the Japanese invasion of India, the Nagas had remained consistently loyal and helpful. This was recognised in some measure in an article in *The Times* of December 29, 1944, where it was pointed out that "Naga labourers played the major role in keeping the Tamu road open for Field Marshal Alexander's retreating army in the rains of 1942; that Nagas and Kukis were to be found fighting in the Assam Rifles and in the Assam Regiment and that at one time Naga tribesmen had the distinction of having captured more Japanese prisoners than the whole of the Fourteenth Army. The Japanese made many great efforts to obtain the co-operation of Naga interpreters, policemen and government officials for intelligence purposes, but all in vain. A Naga Government interpreter located a Japanese ammunition party of nine men and organised a band of villagers who surrounded and captured them. This was typical of the sort of assistance given. Another interpreter, hearing of an advanced Japanese patrol of 15 men, guided a British patrol to ambush and capture or destroy the party, which he assisted in doing himself. One Naga undertook a night trip behind the Japanese lines in Kohima village and its outskirts and came back with detailed information, which enabled troops to push into Kohima village and turn the whole Japanese position. Another brought back information so accurate that targets on the Japanese supply line could be pin-pointed and

destroyed from the air with the greatest precision."

Just after the war there was the common talk of the Indian Independence and a question many people were asking themselves seriously was what would be the future of the North-Eastern tribes in an independent India? Several possible solutions to the question were put forward by different persons, but those are of no relevance to be discussed here in detail.

During those days, there was no institution or forum where the tribal people could exchange their opinions and ideas to formulate any policy. With the aim of uniting the Nagas, C.R. Pasweey the then Deputy Commissioner of Naga Hills, established an Institution in 1945 by the name "The Naga Hill District Tribal Council", which however did not survive long. A conference of the representatives of the deferent tribes held in February, 1946, changed its name to that of the Naga National Council which ultimately emerged as the only political organisation in Naga Hills. Its aim was to foster the welfare and social aspirations of the Naga tribes and it received official patronage as a unifying and moderating influence. Gradually its sphere of activities extended to the field of politics and it worked for achievement of the solidarity for all the Naga tribes and satisfaction of its political aspirations. Towards the end of 1949 with the change of the office bearers, the temper of NNC also changed in favour of independence but it lacked public support then.

When it came to be known that the British had a scheme to carve out a Trust Territory comprising the Naga Hills, the area now forming the North-East Frontier Agency, and upper part of Burma inhabited by the tribal people, the Nagas opposed the idea and later the Naga National Council openly declared that the moment British quit India, it would have to quit Naga Hills as well. The suggestion was in fact the forming of a new state which was in essence a crown colony quite separate from the Government of India. Had the Nagas lent the slightest support or encouragement to the scheme, the colony might have been established. The fear of the British colonising their country spread quickly among the educated classes of the Nagas and when the effects of colonisation as distinguished from the effects of the foreign rule were pointed out to the masses the decision of the Nagas was quick and firm: "The British must go". The idea of a new colony was equally opposed by the Indian National Congress also.

The attainment of the Indian Independence was celebrated all over Naga Hills with great excitement and enthusiasm. The tribesmen were happy as any other Indian on the achievement of freedom. The exciting activities which marked the years preceding the transfer of power had ceased and the period following the transfer of power till the end of 1950 remained comparatively quiet and uneventful except for occasional meetings with visiting dignitaries. The period was actually the best time for a permanent settlement before the restlessness and discontentment

among the hill tribes erupted. From 1952 onward the relations between the Nagas and the Government of India gradually deteriorated due to a series of unfavourable factors. I feel the main cause that led to the unfortunate conflict was the government's lack of knowledge of the tribes and their failure to appreciate the basic requirement of the hill man.

Under the British control the practice of head-hunting had been stopped and this had made it possible for them to grow more crops and live freely in safety. However, this change had been removed in consequence of a powerful disciplinary agency. The necessity of the Morung or Bachelor's Dormitory which was a guard house in principle was no longer there. In the past the state of the Morung house in a village indicated the state of the village itself. A decaying Morung meant a decaying village and a well kept and well used Morung a vigorous community. In it the unmarried men slept, strangers were entertained and all public affairs of the village or clan transacted. Apart from a watch house, it was a recreation club, a centre of education, art and discipline and had an important ceremonial purpose. The institution of Morung had made, through the ages, immense impact on the life of Nagas. It was here that lives had been moulded to fall in line with the Naga way of life. The opinion of the contemporaries replaced here the disciplinary influence of the parents on young boys. Here they learnt the advantages of cooperation and responsibility. They became more self-reliant with common sense and better disciplined. It was here that their loyalty and sense of service to the community was developed. Till the recent past the Morung institution had been the most powerful influence in the Naga society. With the decline of this Institution and in the absence of any other Institution in its place the discipline and orderliness particularly among the young people became deteriorated and a vacuum was thus created in the village social organisation.

In the meanwhile mass education started in the area particularly after the Indian Independence. In Naga hills, the percentage of literacy even as late as 1941 was only 5.09 which rose to 10.39 and 17.91 respectively in the years 1951 and 1961. With the introduction of Central Scholarship schemes for the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other backward classes, a considerable number of Naga students could go for post-matric studies and by the end of nineteen fifties, there were several hundreds of matriculates and nearly 300 graduates and post-graduates in different fields.

As a result of the various changes enumerated above an "uneasy population" unable to adjust themselves with village life was created in the rural population. On one hand, the attraction of better lives in urban area brought about by the development schemes and education, and on the other hand, the failure on the part of the village government to enforce the former order and discipline on the younger group, caused movement of this "uneasy population" of males to the urban areas.

It is observed that there has been increase of 131.34 per cent in the



population growth from the year 1901 to 1961 in Nagaland. An increase of 199.5 per cent is observed in rural areas against 519.37 in urban areas. This remarkable increase in urban population had mainly resulted during 1951 to 1961 and had never been observed in any of the previous census. The percentage increase in urban population during this period comes to 364.41.

We can make an analysis of the effects of this population movement. When a man leaves his small village and comes to the town it may appear that he comes out from a very narrow circle and enters a wider circle where he can have a broader outlook and changes his attitude to fit into the new surroundings. But this does not generally happen in the life of the individual. In his village he knows everybody and everybody knows him personally. He is therefore afraid or ashamed of doing any mischief. He may escape the punishment of his parents in the village, but he is afraid of the community and the village council. On the other hand, he is neither known by most of the people nor does he know many in town. He is now a "free man", who does not care what he does or speaks. He is not ashamed of any misdeeds and not afraid of anybody. However, he makes frequent visits to the village and by now the village regards him as a "*chilla walla*" one belonging to the town, and naturally this does not bring him under the sphere of normal village laws. This group of people, as free as they are, often spoil the traditional discipline and cause confusion in the village. Thus there are instances in many villages where conventional rules are altered many times to suit the situation but without success due to factors beyond the control of the village. "The problem caused by such situation might have not been noticed elsewhere, but in Nagaland where various changes were taking place more or less at the same time it did cause certain economic and social problems."

What I want to emphasise from this statement is that during the last few decades due to the impact of modern civilization a great deal of changes had taken place in the traditional way of life in which they were living for centuries often causing discontentment of one section of people or the other. As they emerged from the old society to a new one the whole fabric of traditional society had undergone change creating cultural, socio-economic and political problems. These problems in some form or other might have found expression in the present political movement but to a large extent the Nagas have succeeded in adjusting themselves to the new situation.

The principle of collective responsibility worked very well among the North-Eastern tribes, particularly among the Nagas, with any sort of political institution from autocracy to extreme democracy, and so no civil police were necessary and the decentralised system of justice was accompanied by an exceptionally low rate of crime. But the sudden show of strong police in the area particularly from the early part of 1953 due to certain local incidents and the rapid spread of the police force deep into the villages was taken as a challenge by many people. At one time, the presence of an armed

force in their land was regarded as a display of authority of the government, but this was not so in 1953. Because the problem was not only of law and order or political but it was something more than that. A situation which should have been settled without much quarrel was thus allowed to deteriorate leading to long years of hostilities and distrust.

The Second World War and the recent Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistan conflicts were testing times for the loyalty of the Nagas. All throughout they remained consistently loyal and helpful. When the security force stationed in Nagaland were pulled out during those conflicts, even the underground Nagas did not take the advantage of this situation. The Nagas, rich and poor alike, donated generously to the National Defence Fund. Such behaviour indicates the attitude of their leaning towards India.

The main causes of the present movements are:

- (1) Pride of ethnic identification;
- (2) Fear of exploitation; and
- (3) Love of liberty and independence.

The present problem with the Nagas is not economic. It is neither a socio-cultural problem. After the Independence the Government of India threw open the door of isolation and poured in assistance. The various development schemes taken up under the Five Year Plans have not only benefited the people but have convinced them of the government's genuine intention to uplift them in their own way. By circumstances, sooner or later Nagas with all the Christians, but so long as India remains secular State, it is not a problem. It is a political problem and needs political solution. An approach of economic development alone will not be an answer.

The need of the hour is a permanent settlement of the problem. Otherwise, the favourable climate created so expensively during the last few years may be shattered at any moment and take us all back to the same region of hostility.

Shall we not be in a position to suggest ways and means for a solution in the light of the recent favourable developments?

# The Problem of Tribal Integration to Industrial Society: A Theoretical Approach

GOURANGA CHATTOPADHYAY

The problem of the integration of tribals of India to industrial society is indeed a tough problem that is worthy of deep study and deliberation.

To begin with, I wish to share with you my thoughts on the first problem that I faced when I tried to write this paper, a problem that I would like you to seriously consider. That problem is the definition of the term 'integration'.

The term is most commonly used to mean *meeting together of divergent cultures without loss of identity and individuality*.

It may be easily seen that such a definition is full of metaphors. Literally, cultures neither meet, nor do any two persons lose their identity and individuality of they meet. Even husband and wife, after spending long married years together, seldom lose their individuality, not to speak of identity.

Let any of you think that I am trying to say that I am the first person to find this play of metaphors a problem, let me quickly quote to you from the famous Polish sociologist Ossowski:<sup>1</sup>

Metaphorical expressions whose meaning has never been classified in such a way as to make it possible in regard them as new terms cease through common use to impress one as metaphors. Through such common use their new meaning becomes the current meaning, emancipated to a certain extent from the original meaning. None-the-less a legacy of the metaphors is perceived in pictorial associations with an intuitive appeal. Owing to this institution on the one hand and routine on the other, one does not feel a need to ask how one should understand place in the system of production.

Questions about the meaning of phrases or terms in the social sciences can be dangerous for the routine ways of thinking if the inquirer is not satisfied with an exemplification. This is not merely because such questioning can disturb established verbal usage but also because it can reveal new problems which were formerly screened by ambiguous terminology and conceptual condensation.

So, in my view, one of the essential tasks before this Seminar is to define, precisely and scientifically, what integration really means. The second step will be to consider if that kind of integration is possible or suitable.

To that end, let me now go back to the definition of integration. Let us suppose that integration of the tribals mean that they retain their language, they retain their myths and religion, they retain some of their institution, and at the same time take to urban dress, urban form of housing and get industrial jobs at various levels of hierarchy.

As an illustration of such a situation, let us further suppose that a group of Todas go through this process in Tamil Nadu. Three young Toda officer trainees of a firm like their counterparts from among the non-tribals, find it very hard to set up homes because their salaries are too low to maintain a car and three shining suits, buy permits and keep drinks at home at least for offering to fellow executives, and smoke a moderately good brand of cigarettes, and at the same time marry and have children. For the non-tribal young officer trainees too this problem results in delaying their wedding because they are not prepared to give up some of the functional acquisitions and/or status symbols listed out above. But, for the Toda officer trainees, who have become integrated, i.e. retained their cultural identity and individuality, this is no problem at all. Three of them go together and propose to the Assistant Manager's daughter to become their common wife in a poly-androus marriage: Why not?

Or think of the Ho skilled workers, again properly integrated, who after being thrown out by the Chief Foreman from his house because the former had dared to propose to the latter's daughter, easily solves his problem of marriage by kidnapping the Chief Foreman's daughter in the traditional manner, i.e. *oportipi* when she is returning from a shopping trip, and consummates the marriage traditionally. Again, why not, integration being our goal?

I have to curb here my impulse to go on giving many more hypothetical illustrations and ask you, do we really want this kind of integration?

I don't at least and I do not think that any of you do either. So, the question that I place before you is, what do we all want?

As a student of anthropology, I find it hard to visualise a society where large groups of people do not stay separately, but get to live in spatially and socially mixed units and at the same time retain cultural distinctiveness.

One of the most important aspects of culture is the behavioural norm and pattern, and naturally the value system that backs up the behavioural norm. If neighbours continually disagree about the days on which the local shops ought to be closed, about the kinds of functions that should be held in the community hall, and try to stop each others' sons and daughters from mixing with one another for fear of their losing their cultural values, or if peers in industry continuously bicker over holiday lists that have to include all the major festivals of every group, over their culturally approved status



symbols for senior officers and so on, I for one cannot see how we can ever have either a sane and healthy urban life or productive industrial life.

Again, if we look at the way integration is being planned for another distinctive sector of India's population, we find that the term there really means making them lose their distinctiveness, their intensity, their individuality. I am thinking of the former ruling princes, the *maharajahs* and the *ranis*. First, their hereditary titles were stopped from being passed down, then their lands and rights over people were taken away, and now we wish to take away their extra money so that they will in the end have to give up their distinctive style of life.

So, on the one hand, the definition of integration is keeping the distinctiveness of a group, and on the other, removing it. Once again I have to repeat the question: how do we want to define the term now?

I would now like to examine, briefly, why we define *integration* differently for these two polar groups, paying more attention to the tribals.

Certain communities in India have tended to stay on the fringes of the Indian society, in terms of participation in the economic, political and ritual structures, for as long as history takes us back. They have been allocated such occupations as have given them low ritual positions. Also, some of these communities have been spatially driven to the fringes of the developed areas. The tribes fall in the latter category. I call such communities as the *fringe communities* and the dominant communities as the *core communities*.

There are various social processes, which we need to identify through research, by which the core communities have managed to keep for themselves the maximum benefits from the available resources. There is no reason to assume that the fringe communities have docilely and passively allowed this process to continue. Therefore, we have also the necessity to undertake research to look for both the external or core-fringe relationship and the internal relationships within the core and the fringe communities to locate the processes through which they let loose their aggression and defend themselves against aggression, respectively. On the hypotheses side, in this connection, the following may be listed out:

(1) A fringe community is allowed economic existence by the core so long as the former perform the peripheral economic tasks of the society, i.e. cleaning jungles and bringing virgin land under plough, scavenging in cities, manually coal cutting in mining industry, etc. A corollary to this is that as soon as a fringe community tries to enter into areas of main economic activities, the core communities try to stop them. This is an area of conflict in the Indian society.

(2) Generally, economic classes and castes run parallelly, i.e. the so-called upper classes in India draw their members only from upper castes and the lower castes and tribes belong to the lower class. But obviously a

number of castemen are economically members of the lower class and though comparatively few in number, some lower castemen and tribals are affluent enough to belong to the upper class. Here a conflict develops between class alliance and caste solidarity in a crisis situation.

(3) The younger members of the fringe communities generally have better education and consequent broader world view than their elders, thanks to the efforts of government agencies since Independence, and therefore they are not averse to try to compete with the core. This again creates conflict.

(4) There should be a common and discernible pattern by which the fringe community as a whole, or its younger members, try to enter into the fields of major economic activities. This process is triggered off by some outside agency like the government or the expanding industrial world.

(5) There is a common pattern of resistance on the part of the core. Now then, if hypotheses 1 to 5 are tested and found correct, which I believe will happen if research is undertaken seriously, the research data will give us valuable indications for resolving conflicts in Indian society at various levels and stopping wastage of national resources. But what is more important from this Seminar's point of view is that, these data will indicate to us the measures that we may recommend to the government and the industry by which the tribals, who are members of the fringe communities, can be helped to become part of the core, i.e. cease to be a backward class.

But there is a problem in doing this work. Recently Cathleen Gough in an article in the *Political and Economic Weekly*<sup>A</sup> has shown how the American and European anthropologists so far have played the role of benevolent members of the masters' race who are the friends of the tribals, and now that the colonies are gone, they are facing the crisis of having to redefine their role. A number of senior Indian anthropologists have been either patriots who wanted to apply scientific theory for the upliftment of the most exploited sections of the Indian society under the British yoke, or civil servants, mostly white, who had an approach similar to what Gough has described. This former class of anthropologist included a handful of people, and only one or two of this breed are there with us today on the Indian scene. It is only after Independence that a large number of anthropologists have started coming out of the universities. All of them, or a very large majority of them, belong to the core communities, and I suspect that their attitude to tribals are somewhat like that of an elder brother towards his slightly retarded younger brother, who nonetheless has some unique gifts like being able to draw well, or is good at tinkering with faulty mechanisms of household gadgets and cars. Even if the younger brother is treated by the psychiatrist and cured, the elder brother must see that the cured younger brother retains his gift. Also, the tribals are gifted in folk-music and the like, and therefore they must retain some of their distinctiveness even when they are economically uplifted. The ex-rulers, on

the other hand, are a threat to the bourgeois anthropologist and policy-makers in terms of their remaining powerful members of the core. Therefore, when it comes to the ex-rulers, integration has to mean thoroughly removing their distinctiveness. This is one of those situations where utmost hypocrisy is practised by intelligent and otherwise sincere people.

But have any anthropologist or the policy-makers in the government ever asked the backward sections, the tribals, if they wish to retain their individuality and separate identity within the Indian society? I assume that the answer will be a negative one because the anthropologists and policy-makers believe that they know what is good for those under-privileged people—but do they really?

Let us for a moment examine some of the costs of such integration. Since education and training are of primary necessities for integrating the tribals, and since their distinctiveness have to be kept as well, a young tribal boy will have to learn his own language on top of the tremendous load of three other languages. Educationists will have to tell us if a boy can learn mathematics after tackling four languages. Then the boy must learn the Indian history and mythology and the myths and lores of his own tribe as well. The boy must also go through a process of socialisation that includes the norms and mores of the tribal as well as non-tribal urban society. Once again I shall curb my desire to go on listing the number of extra things that a tribal boy or girl will have to learn in order to be integrated. But if this kind of education and social training are ever given to the tribal youngsters, I apprehend that we shall create a group of people in India who will be absolutely torn between values and behaviour norms and be hopelessly demoralised in the end through being highly conflict ridden. Yet we keep on recommending this path because we are being governed by our core values. In plain language, we are being hypocritical as anthropologists and policy-makers in our approach to the question of betterment of the tribals.

So, my recommendation will be that we give up the idea of integration altogether and think of helping the tribals to detribalise themselves in whatever way they like to, so that there would not be any difference between an Oraon and a Hindu or a Muslim Bihari, a Tamil and a Toda and so on, in course of time. Education will naturally play an important role in this process. I am not an expert on tribal education. Experts are already aware of the problems and are taking steps.<sup>5</sup>

Finally, I am sure most of you cannot stand the term 'detribalisation'. Yet, I believe, from available data, that is what most tribesmen would like to happen (barring, perhaps, a few tribal leaders, who would oppose detribalisation because then they would not be able to thrive on the gains of 'leading' the tribes).

I have elsewhere discussed the problems of value conflict in Indian industries where I have argued that the machines need a kind of human organisation that has evolved in the West and such organisations demand a set

of behavioural norms that are based upon values that radically differ from the general Indian behavioural norms and values.<sup>6</sup> This results in conflicts and loss of productivity. The answer to that problem is to either change the Indian value system and behavioural norms or innovate a new type of human organisation for industries and not just copy the organisation structure of, say, the Ford Motor Company when we start an automobile manufacturing firm in India. By the same token, we shall be perpetuating conflict among tribals and non-tribals, and keep on cherishing catalysts of disintegration, so long as we think of integrating the tribals to the urban industrial society by keeping their individuality and identity intact. I, therefore, vote for assimilation. I am not thinking of the caste-ridden Indian society where the tribes will become new low Hindu castes, but I visualise an Indian society where they become first class Indian citizens.

As a matter of fact, if we closely examine the tribal values, we may even find that they are more suited to the industrial organisations, given education and training, than the Hindus or the Muslims.

The tribals do not have a closed class system, nor do they have taboo on female labour. They do not have any negative values on working with machines or on craftsmanship. Some of their difficulties in adjusting with an industrial system like having behavioural norms suited to an agrarian economy and large functional kinship network are common to other Indian communities as well. So if there are any difficulties in getting adjusted to the modern industrial system, from the theoretical point of view, these are mainly of the core communities. And this again fits in well with my earlier 5 hypotheses of core-fringe conflict, i.e. the core communities are keeping the fringe away. Inherently there is little in the values of the fringe communities that make that especially unfit to get adjusted to the industrial system. And the anthropologists and the policy-makers, being parts of the core, are finding rationales for keeping the tribes on the fringe.

Let me justify the above statement by quoting from one of the latest government approved organised efforts of the core to do something for the fringe.<sup>7</sup> 'Centuries of living in natural habitat like hills and forests has made them veritably the children of nature' or '... the tribals...have...very close identification and affinity with "nature" and "spirits".' The first sentence may imply that therefore they are incapable of running such "unnatural" things as machines and the second sentence may imply that they therefore cannot find affinity with urban centres and be incapable of understanding cause-effect relationship. As a matter of fact, on page six of the same report this has been stated more bluntly: "In short, a tribal society is essentially a pre-industrial society. When such a society is suddenly exposed to powerful forces operating in an industrialising society, it is natural for the members of such a society to be swept off their feet." Apart from the question of clarification that one may seek of such metaphors as being 'swept of their



feet', my major question is, has anyone measured the gap between the industrial society and the pre-industrial society that is India itself, which is represented by the rural sector, and the gap between the industrial society and the tribal pre-industrial society? Before doing that why are we trying to prove that the tribals are particularly sensitive to industrialisation?

Or again, the same report tells us that the tribal ethics is free from the greed for accumulation of wealth and that the tribal approach to material acquisition is moral and rational.

After circumventing the minor difficulty of interpreting the meanings of 'moral' and 'rational' in this context, I find it difficult to accept the statement when we have the data, for example, on the changing economic life of the Khasis, of how they have taken advantage of their law that anyone who plants a garden of trees has personal rights over that land;<sup>8</sup> we also have the data on the wealth of the *Mankis* of the Hos;<sup>9</sup> more important, we have the data on how systematically all the tribes have been kept away from having the opportunity for making material acquisition. I do not think that in reality the tribals have any vastly different approach to accumulation of materials from their Hindu or Muslim neighbours. As for greed, there has not been any psychological studies.

To summarise this paper, then, (a) the tribals as part of the fringe communities are making and will continue to make effort to be a part of the urban industrial system and what we have to do is to locate the process of resistance to this effort on the part of the core communities, with a view to minimise the resistance; (b) anthropologists and policy-makers have to realise their subjective bias as members of the core communities when they are studying the tribals, recommending policies for tribals or actually taking decisions about the tribals; (c) the task noted in (b) is a very difficult one because we have become used to rationalising our motives, i.e. we have become successful hypocrites, and we also got the support of the tribal leaders because they will lose their leadership in a new situation. But an appraisal of the roles of anthropologists and policy-makers at Centre is immediately integrated or to be detribalised citizens of the Republic of India; (d) research is immediately needed to test out the hypotheses related to what has been noted above; research is also needed to test the tentative hypothesis noted above that the values and behavioural norms of the tribals may be more in conformity than those of the non-tribal Indians with the values and norms of industrial organisation.

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# Tribalism, Pluralism and Nationalism: Levels of Cultural Identity in Banari

D.P. SINHA

The main objective of this paper is to understand and analyse the levels of cultural identity in Chotanagpur, Bihar. In doing so I shall primarily draw upon my data from Banari, a small region south-west of Ranchi where I have been carrying out field work for over a decade now. I must state at the outset that although the data represent a small geographical area, I believe they have relevance for outside the region they represent.

This paper has three parts. The first introduces the region, the second describes some socio-cultural processes influencing the cultural identities of the people in Banari, and the third attempts to analyse and interpret the levels of cultural identity in Banari. The data included herein are drawn from cases, events and processes witnessed in Banari, and I must add that the analysis offered here is suggestive rather than conclusive.

## I

Banari is a small geographical region of about 500 sq. miles. The region is like a bowl, about 3,700 feet high hills on the circumference and on an average 2,100 feet high valley at the centre. Banari is connected by a hard surfaced road to Lohardaga, the nearest town and railway station 40 miles to the east, and to Ranchi, the district headquarters, 82 miles in the same direction. Over 80 per cent of nearly twenty thousand people living in this region belong to the Scheduled tribes—the agricultural Oraon, the horticultural Birjia, the Chik-Baraik weavers, the iron smelting Asur, and the Birhor who are foodgatherers, rope makers and hunters—and, the remaining are drawn from several Hindu communities such as the Rajput who are big landowners and farmers, the trader Bania, the potter Kumhar, the blacksmith Lohar etc. etc. The two main languages spoken by the tribal population are the Dravidian Kurukh and the Austro-Asiatic Munda. The lingua franca of the region is an Indo-European dialect, Sadari, which is the mother tongue of the Sadans, the Hindu communities in the region.

The Banari region has three distinct econological zones; the hills and the plateaus, the escarpments, and the valley. Besides, it has several ecological niches which support occupationally specialised communities (Sinha 1963).

The hills and plateaus produce maize and millets and are occupied by sparse settlements of horticultural communities, the escarpments with luxurious forests support several artisan communities to rope makers, basket makers, iron smelters, food-gatherers and hunters; and the valley which produces the most important staple of the region, rice, besides other cereals, has many nucleated settlements of agricultural communities together with partly agricultural traders, blacksmiths, potters, weavers, etc.etc.

According to folk history the earliest settlers in this region were the Munda who were displaced by the Oraon over 1,300 years ago (Roy 1915). Most other tribal groups emerged from these two; probably because of their ecological and occupational specialisation. The Hindus entered this region in early nineteenth century; the Rajput colonised villages in the valley and became landlords, the Bania came in as traders and most other non-tribal groups were brought in by either of these two to provide specialised functions. The Rajput displaced the Oraon in the local power structure; however in course of time the various groups in Banari established network of socio-economic relationship with each other.

Around the middle of this century, mainly because of Indian independence and the government's special attention towards the development of the scheduled areas and the scheduled tribes, the Banari region witnessed rapid socio-cultural change (Sinha 1968). Opening up of roads, establishment of schools and public health facilities, introduction of new technologies for the development of agricultural and handicraft economy, acceptance of a political system based on adult franchise, and the creation of a new development administration etc. led to socio-economic change in the region. Whereas the people welcomed the new opportunities, their abrupt confrontation with the changing order caused alarm and fear particularly on the part of the tribal communities in Banari. These generated conflict of interests and values and brought in sharp focus varying levels of cultural identity in Banari to which I would turn to in the following sections.

## II

Conceptually, the levels of cultural identity in contemporary Banari can best be described in terms of what I promise to call, "tribalism", "pluralism" and "nationalism". Semantically, these are not the best terms but I shall try to explain them with examples drawn from my own experience in Banari. I may also note that the "levels" of identity do not imply stages of development; to me they only mean distinct as well as related conceptual categories.

The most explicit and conspicuous illustration of "tribalism" in Banari is found in the recent attempt by the Adibasis and the non-Adibasis to consolidate their socio-cultural boundaries. This is being carried out in two ways, by the process of exclusion, i.e. narrowing the boundaries and/or by the process of



inclusion, i.e. widening the boundaries.

Let me first cite the case of the Jharkhand. Of late, this movement which has aimed at the formation of a separate tribal state in Central India, has gathered considerable support in Banari. My first experience of this movement dates back to January 1958 when I witnessed a small group of young mission-educated Adibasis going around the region recounting oppression and exploitation by the Hindu landlords and traders in the region. They appealed for unity among the Adibasis of Chota Nagpur. It was a thinly attended meeting near Banari market and most people who assembled around it dismissed it as a fun. However, the youngmen reiterated that unless the *Dikus*, a derogatory term for the non-tribals, ceased their exploitation of the Adibasis, they shall have to leave the Jharkhand. By highlighting the above cleavage, the youngmen, it appears, were attempting to consolidate the identity of the tribal people in the region.

To cite another example, in 1960, a small band of people, holding Jharkhand banner, singing folk songs which highlighted the goals of the separatist movement, demanding a separate state for the tribal people, assembled in a mango grove in a "closed door" meeting. I was told, the meeting discussed various strategies for neutralising the autocratic authority of the *Dikus*. Like all *Dikus*, I was advised against attending the meeting; but I waited and watched it from a distance. Perhaps on realising that I was keen on watching the proceedings, one man came to me and said, "You can come, you are from outside the region". In excluding the *Dikus* from their meeting, it appears, the tribals wanted to consolidate their identity by allowing me to participate in their deliberations, they probably attempted to establish that their exclusion was directed primarily at the *Dikus* from within the region.

It is this process of inclusion and exclusion, used for consolidating one's socio-cultural identity which characterise that so-called "tribalism" in Banari.

Historically, in Banari, "power"—and I mean *de facto* power—rested with the Rajput landlords. Most Adibasis rented the power elite; yet were unable to do a thing about it. After independence, even when the base of power changed from economic wealth to political suffrage, the landlords continued to be elected to the new seats of power in village panchayats and Block Samitis. But, in 1968 when the tribal people realised their political strength they reversed the process. The Adibasis, by consolidating their membership, kept the Hindu landlords out of the Panchayats and elected an Oraon to the post of the Pramukh, a powerful one in the Block Samiti.

Attempt to consolidate their identity is not only confined to the tribal people in Banari. The local Hindus, particularly the Zamindars and the traders,

\* "Tribalism" does not mean that its process applies to tribes alone. It particularly refers to the defined socio-cultural boundaries and the elements of homogeneity so characteristic of a tribal community.

have been at it for centuries. I will, however, give here only one example. In 1968 summer the Banari region was threatened with famine. Everyone was concerned, fields had dried, livestock were dying, people were on the verge of starvation. Seizing this opportunity the Hindu landlords of Banari invited every non-Christian tribes and caste men to join hands and to propitiate a local tribal deity who might avert the catastrophe. One morning they all assembled on the river, had a wash and took out a procession, singing and chanting, to the local shrine for offering their prayer. Here by regrouping themselves with the tribal non-Christians, particularly the Bhagats, a Hinduised section of the Oraon, the Hindus, I believe, were tempting to exclude the Christians, who incidentally were the most vocal in the above noted separatist movement. In other words, by widening their membership, they were consolidating the identity of the Hindus vis-a-vis the Christians.

As though responding to above, I am told in 1967-68, some Christians organised themselves in the so-called welfare and service society, whose main objective is to rephrase the history of tribal unrest in Chota Nagpur as a history of conflict and battle against the *Dikus*, the Hindu settlers in the region. While their impact in Banari is not significant, their reaction was felt on the latest mid-term poll in Banari where a tribal Jan Sangh candidate won the election, primarily by approaching the electorate as two groups; the Christians and the non-Christians. The Hindus grouped themselves with the non-Christian Adibasis and isolated the Christian candidates representing other political parties.

Let me now turn to what I have called "pluralism" in Banari. Very simply the level of cultural identity characterised by pluralism reflects a situation where two or more ethnic communities co-exist; they interact but remain distinct belonging to different wholes. The members of the one ethnic community do not expect a member of another to participate in their network of traditional obligations and the latter do not expect to become a member of their community. His specialised role in the region is accepted because it is functional to the maintenance of the inter-cultural task. This pluralism has been a part of the traditional society in Banari, as described in Part I of this paper (also see, Sinha 1968). To illustrate this point I may cite the case of the Hindu traders in Banari.

The traders have lived in Banari for many decades. In its ecologically diverse region, with several distinct occupational groups producing specialised commodities, the traders have served as the focal point of re-distribution of regional resources (Sinha 1968). Yet, their strong orientation to trade rather than to the local community has classified them as an outsider—most sought after in times of need and hated at all other times by the Adibasis in the region. The traders, by their very role which is functional in the regional economy have contributed to the pluralism in Banari.

The Rajput landlords have, likewise, contributed to pluralism in Banari. More wealthy than others, exercising considerable authority in their feudal zamindari, they have wielded unlimited power over the people in the region. Everyone in Banari looks at the landlord as a potential source of trouble, and therefore, surprisingly, as a source of help, giving rise to what I call dependency relationship. The people are dependent on landlords and the landlord is, as though, independent of them, maintaining distance with other communities. The landlord's socio-cultural point of reference is outside rather than inside the region he lives in. Here the unequal power enjoyed by the community which is oriented to an external source has given rise to pluralism.

Permit me to narrate one personal experience which indicates how existing power structure supports pluralism in Banari. In 1966, having lived in the region, off and on, for ten years, I wanted to build a small field base in the village. The local administration agreed to settle one half acre homestead land to me for this purpose. Everyone in and around Banari knew about it. The Adibasis unanimously supported my proposal; others did not comment one way or the other. The traders and the landlords, however, quietly raised objection with the administration against the proposed settlement of land. Later inquiry revealed that the Adibasis wanted me there partly in order to neutralise the power of the *Dikus*; the *Dikus* disapproved of my permanent base there because they believed that I might, as an intermediary, influence their pluralistic base of the local society.

Of late pluralism in Banari has been accentuated by the Christian missions. The missions have established a dependency relationship with their followers who alone can seek favours from them. During 1966 famine the Banari mission assisted the starving natives with food, but this assistance was practically confined to the Christians only although there were some non-Christians in greater need for assistance. The people did not take time to realise that the preferential treatment given by the mission to some of them belonging to their own community had split them into two groups.

One more observation. In past the communities such as the Rajput and the Bania, were by needs of the situation, getting oriented to and identified with the region. The isolation had minimised their external alliance and affiliation and speeded up their interdependence within the regional community (Sinha 1968). However, during the past two decades pluralism in Banari has re-emerged in sharp relief. The rapid growth of communication, increased awareness of external environment, abrupt opening up of the whole new world, have extended new horizons for the people and accentuated the new parameters of pluralism in Banari.

Along with "tribalism" and "pluralism", one also discerns the

phenomenon "nationalism" in Banari. Nationalism in its simplest sense means sharing the sentiments and symbols, and being a part of the process which involves the national community. It is the awareness and involvement, interdependenced and understanding that seems basic to the cultural identity expressed in "nationalism".

To cite a dramatic illustration, during the Chinese and Pakistani aggression on India in 1962 and 1965, the people of Banari shared the sentiments and anxieties of people all over the country, and rallied behind the nation. On both occasions youngmen, irrespective of their ethnic or religious affiliation, volunteered for the Indian army. Every day, during the war, people collected around radios for listening the latest news; some even walked miles to reach a radio set. This I believe markedly reflected their feelings of concern and involvement in national issues.

In Banari, there is a small group of Oraon, called Tana Bhagat, which has been following for over four decades now, some of the national values set by Mahatma Gandhi. Culturally, the Tana Bhagats have developed a strong puritan system. They call themselves nationalists and carry even now the Congress flag which was once the symbol of nationalism in India. Although the Tanas have presently lost the significance of the cause they once stood for, their adherence to the national values of the past do reflect, implicitly though, the abstract concept of nationalism in Banari; that, there is something beyond, which could be shared by the people in his region.

Most people in Banari are not concerned about the national flag, the national language, or the national anthem although the educated youngmen do have some understanding about them. To the majority the national symbol is the coin, the currency, which is super-regional, indeed, national. I have often heard in Banari that people in other regions differ on the issues of language or the dress they all share the currency circulating in the country.

All said and done, nationalism in Banari is by and large an implicit phenomenon. When asked what is pan-Indian in Banari, most of my informants looked askance; some answered "the Community Development Block", others added "election". People in Banari know that Blocks are spread all over the country and the residents in each Block receive similar assistance and are subject to similar constraints and limitations. Election, likewise, is perceived as notional phenomenon. And even when it is held at different points of time in different parts of the country, some of my perceived informants told me that they share in election is process—that everyone in India has to go through it to elect its representatives in the Panchayat, in the Assembly, in the Parliament. In contemporary Banari the Block and the election are symbols of nationalism.

Cases described above could be multiplied. But before I conclude I would like to make another observation. One of the important factors which have contributed towards the growth of national identity in Banari is the growing



economy of the region. Not long ago, Banari had an insulated economy, where regional produce was re-distributed by barter or serial exchange. Later when money was used for commerce in the region, surplus produce was exported out, urban commodities entered the region and the people became dependent on urban economy. Of late, Banari has been producing and exporting cash crops, such as potato and timber. Money is playing an important role, making the region interdependent with urban and industrial economies of India. This process of change from the traditional barter economy to the modern market economy, imperceptibly though, has hastened up interdependence and interrelation of Banari with the national economy, and I believe, has contributed to the national identity in Banari.

### III

Let me now pause and ask what kind of issues these assorted data raise about the levels of cultural identity in Banari.

"Tribalism", "pluralism" and "nationalism" are three interrelated conceptual categories which help us understand the levels of cultural identity in Banari.\* Also, the above data indicate that these conceptual categories do not relate to any particular ethnic group in the region but describe a situation where one or more groups may be involved at a particular point of time.

If someone asked me to identify one dominant level of cultural identity in Banari, I am afraid, I would have to admit that the foregoing data do not lend themselves to any such generalization. Perhaps, more data are called for. If, however, the data presented here represent the cross-section of the events and processes in Banari, as I personally believe, it may safely be said that "tribalism", "pluralism" and "nationalism" are here levels of cultural identity of Banari. Having been familiar with the folk and written history of Banari I can only add that whereas "pluralism" has been current in Banari for a long time, the "tribalism" and the "nationalism" are recent phenomena. These are, I may hypothesise, the by-products of rapid socio-cultural change in Banari. But why the two extremes— "Tribalism" and "nationalism". I venture to suggest that in Banari the former reflects anxiety, insecurity and distrust in the changing situation, and the latter indicates their relative absence.

In the kind of "tribalism" described in language is not an issue, religion is not a issue, although these do manifest themselves as important issues. The real issue to me is the struggle for "power". Theoretically, all over India the centres of power changed after independence: practically, in Banari for many years that followed, the power continued to rest with the

\*For a different approach, see Railey, 1960.

dominant minority. "Tribalism", whether it is the exclusion of the *Dikus* from Banari or the inclusion of the non-Christian natives with the Hindus, is primarily the struggle for power.

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# Integration and Secularism

NIRMAL KUMAR BOSE

There are four facets of the foundation on which India is trying to rebuild her own life and society. These are a Modernized Productive Organization, Democracy, Socialism and Secularism. It was right and proper for Miss Marion Pugh (the Khasi from Assam) and Mrs. Khrieleno Terhuja (the Naga from Nagaland) to raise the question as to what was meant by the term 'Mainstream of Indian Life'; did it mean the Hindu way of life? If so the fear of the Christian, or as one of them said, the 'modernized' tribal communities was indeed great. It is to this question that I shall specifically address myself.

But before I do so, it is necessary for me to clear up a misunderstanding raised by the speech of one of the participants in the morning. While referring to the Hill People's Conference held at the Asutosh Hall in the University of Calcutta in December 1966, he said that in this 'ill-fated; Conference, a view was expressed that the Nagas were a barbarous people, which led almost to a walkout by some of the Naga representatives. As I was a participants in the Conference, just as Professor De was, let me also report that when such a remark was let loose about the Nagas by only one speaker, there was immediately a protest from many other participants who did not belong to the tribal communities. In the concluding speech, a strong sentiment was forcefully expressed, so that in the end the original speaker felt completely isolated from the general stream of opinion. I am referring to this event with a tinge of hesitation, for it is not right and fair for the delegates from Assam and Nagaland in this Seminar to go away with the idea that one particular speaker's voice at the Hill Peoples' Conference represented the voice of India.

Let us now turn to the questions referred to above. By way of introduction, let me say that in any assessment of a civilization or even religion, we should look at what is best in that civilization, at the highest aspiration of those who live by that religion, rather than at its weaknesses. For instance, if we were to try and understand Christianity, should I do so by the life of Lord Clive or of Warren Hastings, rather than that of St. Xavier? In the modern world, the French and Germans, both Christian, have fought against one another and prayed to God separately for victory. It was again a Christian power which hurled the first atom bombs on an Asiatic nation in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Shall we judge Christianity by these, or by the lives of saints like St. Francis or of more modern ones like, say, Romain Rolland or Albert Schweitzer?

In the same manner, I would plead with you to understand Hinduism, not by what some hired *sadhus* have done in Delhi in the name of cow-protection but by what Swami Vivekananda or Maharshi Raman or Gandhiji did in order to raise India from the degradation into which it had sunk after centuries of political subordination.

And what were Gandhiji's ideas about New India? Shortly after Independence, he wrote an article on cow-protection. Hundreds of letters were pouring in with the demand that a law should be passed by the Indian Parliament prohibiting the slaughter of cattle for meat. Gandhiji wrote in that article that the Hindu scriptures had recommended cow-protection for the Hindus, and not for the rest of mankind. India did not belong to the Hindus alone, but to the Moslems, Parsis, Christians and everyone who had made the country his home. The State could never pass a law which preserved specifically the religious desires of any particular denomination. In the same manner, he said, it would be wrong for the State of Pakistan to pass a law prohibiting the worship of idols in temples by the Hindus in that country.

About the same time, the Principal of a Christian Missionary College came to see Gandhiji in Calcutta. This was either in August or September 1947. The Principal asked Gandhiji what his views were with regard to religious education. Gandhiji said that the State should, under no circumstances, finance such *religious* education. The sect had to finance it from its own coffers. And this applied to members of the Christian, Hindu, Moslem or any other religion.

In contrast, we have to remember that the British Government in India which was a Christian government, used to support the Anglican Church partially by means of the Indian tax-payers' money, even when the overwhelming majority among them was not Christians.

Thus, Gandhiji's concept of a secular State was that it should be completely neutral in respect of any religion. The State was not to try and wipe out all religions, but allow people of different faiths to order their lives according to their own faith so long as they did not interfere with the freedom of others also to do so. Gandhiji held that one's religious faith was completely private and personal; it should lead to no political or social discrimination whatsoever.

Thus Gandhiji was clearly in favour of a State which promoted religious neutrality. It was not to promote any sectarian interest at all. On the other hand, its principal purpose was to liberate the 'masses' from their subservience to the 'classes'. And it was therefore that, on his insistence, the Congress Party had to adopt adult franchise as the foundation of our democratic structure. Not only so, his own ideas went even further. Even as early as 1909, Gandhiji had written that under freedom, the 'working classes', by which term he referred to the peasantry specifically, should *the power* to regulate their own lives in freedom. And if, in this task, there was an Englishman who dedicated his life for the cause, he would welcome the Englishman as an Indian. There



was no narrowness in Gandhiji's idea of political emancipation. He wanted his free Indian to share its resources with the rest of the human family. He wanted free Indian to live and die, if necessary, so that the human races might live.

But these are high sentiments to which the rest of his countrymen did not subscribe. Yet, Gandhiji was a practical man, and these were the steps which, apart from religious neutrality and adult franchise he recommended for India. Gandhiji said in 1947 that just as a man should gain a right to vote at, say, the age of 21, there should also be an upper limit, say, the age of 50, when he should cease to have the right of voting. Anybody beyond that age had to serve society, not through votes, but by means of non-political service. The world, he said, belongs to the young. This was a curious, but revolutionary step which Gandhiji also recommended for India's acceptance.

But there was another step also which he recommended three days before he died. This recommendation was that, now that the Congress had successfully attained political independence, *it was time for it to dissolve itself voluntarily*. Henceforth, its workers should devote themselves exclusively to the task of attaining economic, social and moral freedom by means of constructive work. If political action were needed, a new party should be formed, and it should compete with other parties in the service of the nation. He wrote: 'If it (the Congress) engages in the ungainly skirmish for power, it will find one morning that it is no more. Thank God, it is now no longer in sole possession of the field.'

Gandhiji was thus great in his political wisdom, and also great in respect of his reverence for religions other than his own. At this stage, let me remind you of a conference of Christian Missionaries which took place in Savarmati in 1928. One of the participants to that conference asked him what his advice was to Christians in India. Without one moment's hesitation Gandhiji replied that he wished Christians in India to be better Christians.

In the same manner his advice to Hindus or Moslems would be that they should strive to become better Hindus and moslems. But this should be completely their private and personal affair with which the State will have nothing to do.

May I address myself once more to Miss Marion Pugh from Assam and to Mrs. Khrieleno Terhuja from Nagaland? Let me tell them that the secularism which Gandhiji taught us was of the nature described above. The State was to emancipate the peasants, or to use Gandhiji's favourite term, the 'masses', from subordination to the 'classes. And this was to be by the twin methods of constructive work and Satyagraha. Howsoever imperfectly it may be, this is the ideal which the Constitution also holds up as our objective before the people of India. It is secular in the sense that it is designed to promote the interest of no religious sect at the expense of another. It also aims at a classless and casteless society in future.

And with this secularism as the foundation of our political life, the Hindu has to be a better Hindu, the Moslem a better Moslem, a Christian a better Christian in his personal life, while all of us shall work together so that India becomes the happy home of a liberated and cultured people, who share one another's labour in a modernized equalitarian economy.

The dream is great, but it is a dream worth living for. And I would appeal to my Christian brethren to join us, and share the toils of this great adventure. When God made man, he created the Christian as well as the heathen. Let no Christian say today that some men in India are their brothers, and others less so. Let all of us join our hands together in a common and noble enterprise so that poverty is completely eradicated and equality and brotherhood eventually established in our ancient land.

G

A Summary of Some of the  
Remaining Papers





# Cultural Re-Integration of Ladakh

BAIDYANATH SARASWATI

Ladakh is uniquely the region where the two distinct cultures—of Tibet and of India—have met and syncretized. In this configuration of culture what the Ladakhis have retained their own is indeed a distinct culture pattern. Although influences, impacts and pressures are clearly identifiable, there are certain core characteristics used by the Ladakhis in their “self-identification” are

- (1) Ritual
- (2) Material culture
- (3) Language
- (4) Race
- (5) Territory

On the basis of these characteristics, the Ladakhis recognize their ‘fellows’. 1. Although they have been receiving spiritual guidance from Tibet, they have their own indigenous code for performing certain rituals which is different from the Tibetans and other Buddhists. This special code of rituals is claimed to have been developed by the Hemis *gumpa* in Ladakh. 2. In the preparation of food, in the style of dress, and in many other traits of material culture, the Ladakhis have speciality. For instance, *Peyrak*, the headgear of women, is claimed to be Ladakhi’s own invention. 3. Although they have adopted Tibetan script, their tongue is distinguishable from other dialects of Tibeto-Burman family. 4. Racial self-identification is vaguely done on the basis of crude physical characters such as skin-colour and height. 5. The self-identifiable territory of Ladakh is that in which, on the basis of the above four characteristics, the self-recognizably Ladakhi permanently live.

In this ethnocentric tradition of self-conscious ‘oneness’ the Ladakhis’ loyalty or ‘nearness’ to Kashmir and Tibet stands on two different plains. In addition to the concrete observable phenomena, the images drawn on experiences have also guided their consciousness of attachment to Tibet and Kashmir. That the Ladakhis are racially, linguistically and culturally much more distinct from Kashmiris than from the Tibetans is a much less disputable fact. On account of the various geo-political factors, the historical images of Kashmir and Tibet have also been very different. In the context of what is happening in Ladakh today it is necessary to elaborate this point of view.

It is undeniable that in the beginning, Kashmir played a very constructive role in the making of Ladakhi civilization. But in the later part of

history it politically subjugated Ladakh and did all that was possible to erase its cultural tradition. Whenever there was an invasion from Kashmir, whether it was by Moslem King Zianul-Abedin or Hindu Dogra King Gulab Singh, the Ladakhi Buddhists suffered on each occasion the worst kind of religious persecution. Both Hindu and Moslem invaders treated the Buddhists most inclemently, destroyed their monasteries, massacred the lamas and burned their priceless sacred scriptures. A Hindu temple was built on the heaps of the beheaded lamas and a mosque was constructed right in the heart of the Buddhist capital. The Moslem invaders did never lose an opportunity to spread Islamic faith by means of plunder and massacre. Thus, all the good deeds for which Kashmir was remembered by the Ladakhis became an outworn matter. And the only image of Kashmir which remained in the minds of the Ladakhis was of a malevolent master whose deeds were baneful to the growth of their traditional culture. In this context of cultural experiences, the image of Tibet, on the contrary appeared as a benevolent friend promoting their interest in Buddhism and guarding the treasure of their cultural heritage. Between these dialogues of images, one might say, in another context, that both Kashmir and Tibet have only made Ladakh economically poorer and politically inferior.

It is unfortunate that the unfriendly image of Kashmir in the minds of the people of Ladakh has not changed even the two decades of "home rule". The events of today have rather testified the experiences of the past. Ladakhis are convinced that they are not safe in the Moslem-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. This image is clearly reflected in their open demands. As early as 1949, Kushak Bakula declared that "the people of Ladakh were growing anxious about the security of their land and their culture and religion" (*The Hindu*, Madras, November 11, 1949). He asserted his independent position and raised the slogan "Ladakh for Ladakhis". And later on in 1953 while he pleaded for complete integration with India he also made it clear that the Ladakhis were distinct people from Kashmiris—racially, linguistically and culturally. Now in the present agitation, which is supported by all religious and secular leaders of Ladakh, the demands made by Kushak Bakula figured prominently. One of the ten-point charter presented to the Prime Minister of India is that Ladakh should be separated from the rest of the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The impact of the Sino-Indian border conflict and the Chinese conquest of Tibet has also been very adverse on the economy and the religious life of the Ladakhis. The traditional trade with Sinkiang which had been supporting their economy through centuries was stopped. While they were facing this distressing problem of economy, they found the road to their spiritual centre in Lhasa closed. Under this precarious condition they suddenly discovered that their population is dwindling by systematic process of proselytization.

Therefore, if we examine the present problem of Ladakh in anthropo-historic context, we will find it essentially a problem of cultural conflict. The

existence of a culture which flourished with the pride of an independent political tradition has been challenged by an aggressive culture with a much more powerful political system. Eventually, the culture facing the problem of extinction is desperately looking for security. But it does not find its neighbours culturally communicable and the kins-in-faith sealed across the national boundary, it raises the question of survival in the loudest voice of distress. Obviously, what echoes in Ladakh's agitation today is a voice against forcible conversion, a revolt against Kashmir.

### *Cultural re-integration*

Under the prevailing conditions in Ladakh, one often forgets that in spite of the Moslems' best efforts at proselytization in the five hundred years, Ladakh continues to be essentially a Buddhist country. The extent to which Buddhism really prevails in the district (55.5) is obscured by the inclusion of the Kargil tehsil where Moslems are in majority. But, if the Ladakh proper (Leh tehsil) is considered separately, the percentage of Buddhists runs nearly 90. The actual position in 1961 was

	<i>Buddhist</i>	<i>Moslem</i>
Leh	38,713	4,633
Kargil	8,995	35,642
Total	47,708	40,275

In may be pointed out here that out of the total areas of 37,753.8 square miles of the Ladakh district, the tehsil occupies an area of 31,929.0 square miles. It is this vast tract which has been the main land of the Ladakhi Buddhists and it is this territory which is recognized as Ladakh in the Ladakhis' 'self-identification'.

Therefore, unlike the Hindus of Kashmir, the Ladakhi Buddhists have not yet been numerically overwhelmed by Moslems; and they do have a case for the political reorganization of their "self-identifiable" territory as a Buddhist culture areas. For whatever reasons of strategy Ladakh may have been tied with the state of Jammu and Kashmir, one thing is quite obvious that should the basis of the organization of states be language and culture (as has been the case elsewhere in India), the integration of Ladakh with Jammu and Kashmir is unjust and wrong. Linguistically and culturally and racially the only part of India with which Ladakh should have been integrated is the Himalayan district of Lahaul and Spiti which was also once its part and which also forms the part of the Ladakhi's "self-identifiable" territory. Without stretching this context that, political integration is an incomplete process of national integration if it has apparently failed to integrate

the cultures of divergent patterns or the areas of diverse cultures.

There are two methods of cultural integration: one is the Christian and Islamic method of proselytization and another is the "Hindu method of absorption". The cultures which are integrated through the process of proselytization have to pass through the ordeals of complete transformation. For, proselytism stresses on the needs of the unification of the character. It is actuated by a motive of imparting to others a particular model of culture or a particular set of beliefs and ideals which it claims to be the best. This often leads to intolerance towards other cultures. On the other hand, in the Hindu mode of absorption there is no stress on the unification of character. While different cultures are allowed in Hinduism to be autonomous, they are at the same time intrinsically federated through a larger productive organization and a system of "sacred knowledge" which denies the 'absolutism' of any particular faith or practice. In other world, through the Hindu mode of 'absorption' there forms, what N.K. Bose calls, a "democracy of cultures". In this democracy of cultures the nature of freedom granted to various cultures has often been misunderstood. In allowing the 'sophisticated' and 'unsophisticated' cultures to grow side by side, the Hindu view is that the so-called backward cultures may learn by themselves and *not by compulsion* the higher ways of life which have been codified under the rigorous idealizational process by the learned Brahmins. So long the society was suffering from the constraints of poverty and slavery this phenomenon was not at all perceptible, rather it was distorted. But even a small change or improvement in the economic life of the people has now made it of a higher culture on their own accord—of change which M.N. Srinivasa has called 'Sanskritization'.

As noted in the preceding pages, Ladakh has obviously revolted against the Moslems' method of cultural integration. This shows that the Ladakhis cannot peacefully remain politically integrated with the Moslem-majority state of Jammu and Kashmir. The problem of the cultural integration of the Ladakhis through the Hindu mode of absorption does not arise at this point of time. For, Ladakh was an integral part of Buddhist India as early as 243 BC. It is only on account of an historical accident that Buddhism disappeared from India and with this the Ladakhis were also culturally uprooted from their main land. Today, there is no question of integrating Ladakh culturally with the rest of India. What is actually needed is the reaffirmation of the cultural ties which were lost in the complex cycle of events. If the communication between Ladakh and the rest of India is facilitated by promoting pilgrimage to the holy land of Buddha, the Ladakhis will themselves discover that they are culturally, perhaps, more communicable with India than with Tibet or even with the people behind the Chinese wall. In other words, Ladakh needs to be culturally with the rest of India.



## The Bhils on the Border of Rajasthan: An Emerging Situation

N.N. VYAS

The Scheduled Tribes of Rajasthan, viz, Bhil, Mina Garasia, Sahariya and Damor are heavily concentrated in Southern Rajasthan, which comprises Banswara, Dungarpur, Udaipur, Sirohi and Jalote districts. 46.25% of the State's Scheduled Tribes population is found in this part of the state. The inter-state border between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh runs through Banswara and Dungarpur districts of Rajasthan and Jhabua district of Madhya Pradesh having tribals 84.72% of districts' population. The inter-state border between Rajasthan and Gujarat is also dominated by the Scheduled Tribes, for, 24.83% of Gujarat's Scheduled Tribes population inhabit this area. Incidentally these inter-state borders constitute the Bhil habitat.

Close to Jalore in south west of Rajasthan lies Barmer district which is on the international border between India and West Pakistan. In Banmer the Scheduled Tribes population (1.54% of State's Scheduled Tribes population) is insignificant in respect to their number. But owing to Barmer's strategic position on international border, the treatment to Scheduled Tribes needs to be different. Adjoining Barmer there is Tharparkar district of West Pakistan which had 48,599 Bhil and 35,091 Koli population in 1931.

With the partition of India and Pakistan the barriers created problems of adjustment for their inhabitants.

Bhils in the border areas have their relations across the border in Pakistan, and they try to maintain their ties especially through marriages.

The partition adversely affected the economy of the communities living on the borders. Prior to partition trade in jute, cotton, wool hides and skin flourished; now this has been closed and it has not yet been possible to develop alternate markets.

In order to consolidate the boundary and ensure proper defence, it is important that social and economic structures are made strong and reliable. Dependence of Bhils on Muslims and Rajput landlords is considerable. According to the general practice the entire land of the Bhil which is either inherited or allotted is tilled by the Muslim and Rajput landlords.

Improving the lot of our border people is of vital importance. The problems of desert people are different from the people of the plains. Improved farming, drinking water facilities, small-scale industries, animal husbandry and employment opportunities need to be introduced.

## The Character and Consequences of Early British Administration in Garo Hills

PARIMAL CHANDRA KAR

The occupation of the Garo Hills by the British authorities is a story of a bloodless victory over a primitive and unsophisticated tribe. The achievement was inexpensive but politically much significant. This completed the subjugation of the present hill areas of Assam and whole eastern India became a British dominion. The British accession to the Dewani of Bengal in 1765, had extended the new state to the border of the hill areas, which were then surrounded by the estates of different Bengalee Zamindars who were in a state of semi-independence under the Mughal regime. The boundaries of these estates were ill-defined along the hills. These Zamindars established along the foothills a string of *hats* (market places) where the Garos sold their produce and purchased their necessities on payment of tolls. But the exactions of various forms were levied on independent Garos of the interior. These were from time to time aggravated by the Zamindars' frequent mercenary raids into the hills.

Regulation X of 1822 separated the areas of Goalpara, Dhubri and Karaibari bordering on Garo Hills, exempted the Garos and other tribes from the operation of all General Regulations, and established special system of governance for the tract inhabited by them or bordering on their possessions. The Goalpara district was removed out of that bound and attached to Assam in 1826. The Act of 1869 defined the district of Garo Hills and repealed the Regulation of 1822, but, like the foregoing Act, removed the district from the jurisdiction of the civil, criminal and revenue courts and offices established under the General Regulations and Acts. This district was then attached to Assam after it had been formed into a separate administrative unit under a Chief Commissioner. As the Inner Line Regulations could not be applied successfully in a tract like Garo Hills entirely surrounded by settled territories, so power was taken under a regulation passed as Regulation I of 1876 to prevent the entry into Garo Hills, for trading purposes, of unlicenced persons and to control absolutely the acquisition of land by any outsider as it was to be governed by the tribal laws and customs. This prohibitory measure was, however, applicable to all British subjects not being natives of Garo Hills. Regulation II of 1880 empowered the Chief Commissioner, with the previous sanction of the Governor-General in Council, to cancel the operation of any law in force in the district. Under its provisions, the operation of enactments relating to civil and criminal procedure, court fees, stamps, transfer of property and registration has been barred since 1884 and civil procedure code was never

extended to the hill districts. Later on some of the acts relating to above subjects were, however, extended to Garo Hills in a limited sphere and the natives of the districts were left mostly unrelated to these Acts.

A very simple system of administering civil and criminal justice was introduced by a set of rules framed under section 6 of the Scheduled District Act, XIV of 1874. Accordingly, the Deputy Commissioner exercised the combined powers of the District and Session Judge and Magistrate of the district.

During the British rule, there existed no road system worth the name. This negligence, one may guess, was an inherent part of their segregation policy. Hence the transport and communication system within the district also remained totally undeveloped for a long time.

The British authority invited the American Baptist Mission to develop education among the Garos, and used to hand over the entire education grants to the Mission on condition that they would pay a certain amount and render reports.

The education policy of the British authority was no less derogatory than their policy of territorial and administrative isolation as objectively followed in the territory of the Garos. They evaded the entire responsibility only to avoid the initial difficulties. On the other hand, the educational policy of the Mission was subservient to its objective of spreading Christianity.

In its early stages, the British administration aimed at 'reclaiming the tribe to civilisation' in the closely guarded territory of their own. The administration was motivated by humanitarian principles. The gradual rise of the Swadeshi movement, specially that during the first partition of Bengal, made the British authorities more conscious of the inroad that the movement could make into the Garo society and compelled them to close all avenues of communication between the Garos and the people of the plains. Bengali was dropped from the curriculum of the studies; Bengali script was changed into Roman character; and road development was avoided.

## Nyaya Panchayat—as an Indicator of Tribal Situation

BRIJ BEHARI SWAROOP

An attempt has been made to indicate the tribal situation through the study of a Nyaya (Judicial Panchayat) where non-tribals are residing side by side with the tribals. Nyaya Panchayat has been considered a social observatory indicating the tribal situation of an area. The structure of the Nyaya Panchayat will indicate the socio-political situation and, the criminal, civil

and execution cases will indicate the network of socio-economic relations among and of the tribals. In such a situation of mixed population our Nyaya Panchayat has been selected in the tribal setting in Rajasthan.

The present paper is part of a detailed study being carried out. Five year records of a Nyaya Panchayat, that is, from 1962 to 1967, have been consulted. Four meetings of the Nyaya Panchayat were observed along with the conducting of informal interviews of the parties to a dispute, panches and the secretary of the Nyaya Panchayat. Analysis of the data has been made to locate social groups in the tribal setting and, in terms of tribals and non-tribal groups.

The District Dungarpur has a population of 4,06,944; out of it 2,44,782 constitute the tribal population according to the Census of India, 1961. Along with the merger of other princely states, this state has merged with the State of Rajasthan. The State and national laws were uniformly extended to the district.

With the introduction of "Democratic decentralization" programme in the year 1959, a three-tier system of rural administration was extended to this district. At district level "Zila Parishad" was formed. The district was divided into five Panchayat Samities and one hundred eighty Vikas Panchayats. To provide cheap, speedy and economic justice, independent of the executive and legislative bodies, 31 Nyaya Panchayats were formed during the year 1961. Nyaya Panchayat was organized by combining 5 to 7 Vikas Panchayats in a unit. For the present purposes one Nyaya Panchayat, Antari, has been selected from this district.

The criminal and civil jurisdiction of Nyaya Panchayat was, as defined by the Rajasthan Panchayat and Nyaya Panchayat Act, 1953, uniformly extended to the tribal population of Rajasthan. The jurisdictions of the criminal and civil cases have been defined separately in the Act. These offences under other law, that is the Public Gambling Act, the Cattle Trespass Act, the Vaccination Act and the Prevention of Smoking by small children have been given under the jurisdiction of Nyaya Panchayat.

The analysis of criminal and civil cases has been viewed from sociological point of view, in an area of mixed population. Cases reported during the five years' time, that is, from 1962 to 1967, help to locate the conflicting groups among tribals and non-tribals within the jurisdiction of Nyaya Panchayat, Antari.

120 cases were looked into. They indicated the economic relationship of the non-tribal and tribals. Mahajan, Lohar, Kolal and the Bhora (Muslim) a businessman, are the groups who meet the tribals' day-to-day requirements and even influence their social relations. A tribal does not have enough property in order to get his son married. He has to approach a non-tribal to get clothes, money and ornaments. These cases indicate the economic dependence of the tribals and the method the non-tribals have used to ensure this. Non-tribals of the area think that the only way to get money from tribals is to put them under the pressure of law through this



institution. These cases further revealed that the non-tribals are charging three *naya paise* per rupee per month as the rate of interest and that too on depositing silver ornaments. In the year 1965-66, 43 cases were registered by the Mahajans. Lohar and Kolal render services to the tribals. The former supply them the iron implements while the latter supplied them liquor. The non-payment of price led them to file suits against the tribals.

## Impact of Changing Conditions on the Economy of the High Altitude People

SARADINDU BOSE

The economy of the high altitude people is not the same all over the Himalayas. There are people like the Gaddi of Chamba who are seminomadic and primarily dependent on pasturing of sheep and goats, while agriculture becomes of secondary importance; there are the Bhots of northern Sikkim who are primarily dependent on agriculture and with whom pasturing and trade are of secondary importance. In contrast, there are trading or nomadic community widely distributed throughout the high altitudes of the Himalayas. Though these people are restricted within 9,000 to 12,000 ft. and though they experience the influence of rugged topography and extreme climate in a general sense, yet if we study the local environment of each region in detail, we can discern the influence of environment on the variations of economy among the people in question.

It appears that all along the border, the people have been suffering from economic hardships created by border conflicts and political tension. But these people, both in the east or in the west, are hardy and efficient in agriculture, pasturing, and manufacturing of woollen goods.

If certain measures are taken, keeping in view the adaptability of the local tribes, a permanent solution could be found. To cope with the present situation certain measures should be taken immediately:

- (i) Measures for the improvement of pasturing and allied industry.
- (ii) Agricultural development through irrigation.
- (iii) Development of transport system through co-operatives.
- (iv) As vehicular traffic has been opened along these routes, orchards all over the suitable sites can be encouraged.
- (v) Cottage industry and handicrafts should be encouraged.

## National Projects and Displacement of Tribals

NITYANANDA DAS

Location of major national projects has displaced tribals in different parts of the country. Our mineral and hydro-electric projects are located in the heart of tribal areas. The process of displacement began with the Damodar Valley Corporation (Bihar-West Bengal). Thereafter came in rapid succession the Rourkela Steel Plant, the MIG Factory in Koraput, Kiriabar, Hatia, Bailadela, Siluru and othr projects.

Studies conducted in these projects have shown that establishment of these projects began with large-scale land acquisition proceedings. According to the existing law, compensation could be given only to displaced persons. This was not easy. There had been no survey settlement to assess the ownership in land. Tribals usually cultivate plots of land for years by reclamation and they have no legal right over them. Very often compensation paid to tribals is a paltry amount paid to non-tribals of adjoining places. The amount thus received is readily spent in various ways. A study conducted by us in the Salia Irrigation Project area (Orissa) showed that although the tribals received cash compensation for the loss of land, they spent most of the amount within three months. Moneylenders availed of the opportunity to claim their dues. Liquor vendors and itinerant traders claimed a good portion. Hence the displaced tribals could not acquire any land in lieu of the land they lost.

The Rourkela steel plant displaced a large number of tribals. Some of the displaced persons were settled in a couple of colonies in the adjacent places. But there were no cultivable lands. They spent the compensation money, and today their colonies at Jhirpani are in a sad state. At the initial stage they earned a living as unskilled workers. Not being trained workers they could hardly reap benefits of the giant plant. Hence there is a good deal of frustration. Recent riots in Rourkela reveal that increased frustration could jeopardise national interest.

The Dandakaranya Project for settlement of Displaced Persons (DPs) from East Bengal began in 1959 in the backward tribal areas of Orissa and Madhya Pradesh. This began with large-scale reclamation of land by the Central Tractor Organisation. Thousands of acres of virgin forests were made into cultivable land. The project, which initially stipulated integrated development of the area, changed the emphasis in 1961. Only 25% of acclaimed land was to be settled with tribals. While the Displaced Persons were entitled to about Rs. 3,700 for a family, the tribals received only Rs.1,700 per family. There were other benefits given to DPs in the form of medical care, improved seeds, etc. The tribals are settled by respective states after the required grants are sanctioned by the Central Department of Social Welfare.

By that time the reclaimed land become studded with shrubby forests. When this process was going on in the Unerkote area inhabited by advanced groups of tribals, there was no rumbling. But when the operation was extended to Malkangiri, inhabited by the pastoral Koyas, the situation became different.

The Koyas are known for their enormous cattle wealth. They also owned vast tracts of land, which they seldom cared to cultivate in a systematic manner. When DPs were settled in large numbers in this area, Koyas started wondering about their future. Sometimes their land was mortgaged to DPs. Medical and other benefits available to DPs were not for tribals. Large number of employees of the Project from different parts of the country came to the area, and they have scant knowledge of Koya life. 'Topless' Koya girls feel apprehensive, and a serious conflict is brewing in the region. Recently the Chairman of the DDA requested TRB\* in Orissa to study this problem.

The picture is still more portentous around the Tibetan settlement of Chandragiri in Ganjam. Here 226 families of Lanjia Saoras in 13 villages were affected by the Tibetan settlement. The latter received various grants from international agencies. They have been provided with reclaimed land, improved seeds, houses, hospitals, etc. But the Saoras whose village boundaries were affected received no benefit. They were promised land and other advantages but the promise was not kept. Recently Tibetans have come into direct conflict with Saoras.

The Renuka Ray Team (1958) and the Dhebar Commission (1961) emphasised that whenever tribals are displaced for any national or state project they should be settled in land and given house sites as substitutes for the land they lost. We have seldom stuck to such prescriptions. A national policy to settle displaced tribals is overdue.

## Interdependence and Regional Economic Development in Chotanagpur

S.P. SINHA

In this paper an attempt has been made to focus inter-group relations between the tribal and non-tribals as found in tribal areas of Chotanagpur. Inter-group relations is part of the overall human relation and behaviour; but here we are concerned mainly with a relationship growing out of functional economic associations of what are called and understood as

\*Tribal Research Board.

minority and dominant groups.

The chart below shows how in a Tribal village a tribal depends on scores of other people living there. Dr. Surjit Sinha (Calcutta, *Geographical Review*, vol. II, No. I, 1950) found as many as 31 communities subsisting in an area near Bharbharia (Manjhan Block in Singhbhum District), and according to him, when we take the chief economic functions of the different communities we find that they vary from one another in the degree of intensity of mutual economic inter-dependence with the Hos. Following classification of these economic groups bring out the point all the more clear and depict how in many ways a Ho has to depend on others for satisfying his daily requirements.

TABLE SHOWING INTERDEPENDABILITY

Hos	Coimmunities	Purpose
1	2	3
A. The communities on whom Hos depend absolutely for their primary material needs.	Tanti Lohars Kumhars Dom and Mahlis	Cloth Iron implements Earthen pots Bamboo made goods.
B. The communities on whom Hos depend for some minor articles.	Maharanas Mundaris  Jagis Birhors  Thatheries Chinias & Ghasi Mochies  Bhuiyans	Talisman Fishing hooks & silk thread. Wooden combs Basket and ropes made of bark. Metal ornaments Dance drum  Dance drum and leather goods. <i>Cheura</i> or parched rice
C. The communities with whom Hos have no specific economic relationship.	Tamaria Brajbanshi Gopes Mathurabasi Gopes Bengali kimbars Mandals Bhumij and Santhals ]	Oil     Sometime work as paid labourers in Hos field.
D. The communities	Mohemmadans	Stationery goods,



1	2	3
responsible for bringing imported goods to the Hos.	Malhas Paddors Sikhs	clothes, aluminium utencils. Salt and spices Tobacco Ready made garments fountain pen, etc.
E. The communities with whom Hos have practically no economic relations.	Gonds Moats Mundaries	

It is very difficult for anybody to envisage a system in which the exclusive primacy of tribals is re-established.

Although industrialization and urbanization have been transforming Chotanagpur into the Ruhr of India, the question of land proprietorship of the tribals to the exclusion of non-tribals has been posing a challenge to the regional economic development of the area. In this connection we may note the following facts:

The development of the region is inextricably mixed up with the mental make up of the people and it should be our primary concern to devise ways and means to wean the people away from the parochial stand of exclusion of one community or another.

The separatist tendency among the tribes should be met by changing the hardened attitude of non-tribal peoples who have to identify themselves with the tribals or vice versa.

The process of integration of the tribals on national lines has not been allowed to take its proper course due to devious political aspirations of the different political parties.

The Government of India as well as the Government of Bihar go by the vociferous agitation of the agriculturist tribes like the Oraons (17.5%), Mundas (15.5%), Hos (10.8%), Kherwars (2.6%), Santals (36.7%), etc.; Bihar has also been the homeland of the food gatherer and hunting tribes like the Birhors, Korwas, Ho cultivators like Pahariyas, shifting cultivators like Sauria Paharia, Hill Kharia, Asur, etc., artisan communities like Chikbaraik, Loharas, etc. It should be our utmost concern to see that they have their share of the progress.

Employment of the sons of soil, specially those tribals whose land has been taken for industrial and other purposes should be our guiding point. The state should embark upon a policy of the creation of more job opportunities by opening industries and small-scale industries in interior areas.

A wholly integrated welfare programme is needed to implement the debt relief relations and control of the money-lenders' activities.

A crash programme of education among them can bring about prosperity to them and the development of their area.

There is need for a set of social legislation for ameliorating the condition of the tribal people.

## The Saoras of Andhra Pradesh in the Democratic Setup

M. SURYANARAYANA

The total population of the Saoras of Andhra Pradesh is 68,185 (1961), of which 67,137 Saoras are inhabiting Srikakulam district. Parvatipuram, Palakonda, Sompeta and Tekkali *taluks* of Srikakulam district are the thick pockets of the Saora population. The present paper is based on my field work on the Saoras of Parvatipuram, Palakonda and Sompeta *taluks*. One sample village from each of the *taluks* was taken for study, i.e. Kannaiguda, Vojayaiguda and Killoy Tribal Colony from Parvatipuram, Palakonda and Sompeta *taluks* respectively.

The present paper concerns mainly with the political life of the Soaras and it is discussed in two parts:

- (1) Saora Political structure before and after Independence; and
- (2) Saoras and the Tribal unrest.

Saora villages were characterised by the status groups such as the Gamongs, the Buyas and the Parjas. The Gamong was the chief as well as the civil head of the village while the Buya the religious head. The Parjas are common people of the village. The male members of the Gamong and Buya families append Gamong and Buya to their names. The houses and cremation grounds were separate for all the three groups. There were no inter-marriages between the above groups.

G.V. Sitapati and A.C. Munro in 1931 Census report wrote, while discussing the Saora Political Organisation that 'the organisation in the past was in all probability democratic. There are indications in the folklore of a free discussion of any matters of importance at open air meetings. The forms of address used at meetings, as handed down, are 'Oh you Gamongs', 'Oh you Buyas', 'Oh you Parjas'...The privilege of electing offices are hereditary, but nothing of importance could be done by the chiefs without consulting the Parjas".

The Saora villages were under the overall control of the Gamongs of the villages. Saoras never used to react as they pleased and always used to move closely along with other members in the society. The feeling of commonness and the unity of the villages is such we find even now unchanged in many Saora villages. The Gamong used to maintain the law and order in the village. The important duties performed by the Gamong were:

- (i) Attending the marriage functions and settling the bride price;
- (ii) Settling the quarrels in the village;
- (iii) Organisation of the economic activities among the people of the village; and
- (iv) Organisation of the village festivals along with the Buya.

G.V. Sitapati wrote that some of the rulers of the Parlakimidi and others raided the Saora area about 100 years back and brought the area under their control. The disturbance of the political structure of the Saoras started then. The Rajas employed *Muttadars* as agents to them in the agency tracts. The Rajas divided the kingdoms into various *Muthas*. The Rajas employed representatives to look after the agency. They were called the Muttadars. A Muttadar used to look after the administrative matters and used to collect taxes from the people to hand it over to the Rajas. He was almost a feudal chieftain.

At a later stage, the Britishers took the agency under their control from the Rajas. During the British rule, the position of the Muttadar gained legal recognition. He was put under the control of the agent to the British Government. The political structure in the village, however, remained more or less unaltered during the British rule except the legal recognition of the Muttadar system.

After independence and mainly so after the introduction of the Panchayati Raj System, the political structure in the agency changed a little. However, the overall traditional political structure remains the same even today at the village level. The Gamong and the Buya continue to be respected. We find that the endogamous nature of the status groups, as pointed out by G.V. Sitapati, has lost its rigidity at the time of my observations and the status groups are strictly not endogamous at present. I could not ascertain since when this change started. The time gap is about 30 years between the observations of G.V. Sitapati and myself.

The Gamong is still the overall head of the village and maintains law and order in the village. The Buya looks after the religious affairs. Whenever there are important aspects to be discussed, the Gamong never takes decision for himself. He assembles the Buya and all the heads of the families and takes decision after discussing with them. The Gamong and the Buya are invited for a marriage in the village. The Gamong settles the bride-price and the Buya officiates the marriage. Marriage by capture, marriage

by elopment and marriage by intrusion and divorce are required to bear the seal of acceptance of the Gamong. Incestuous alliances and adultery cases are studied and fine is imposed accordingly in consultation with the villagers. In the religious sphere, the Buya takes the prominent role and he, however, organises any festival or ceremony concerning the village in consultation with the Gamong and the villagers. In the economic sphere, the Gamong functions in the settlement of boundaries to the lands. Whenever a property is to be divided, in an extended family and at the time of purchasing a land or disposing of a land, the Gamong of the village is invariably called.

The Panchayat Raj System was introduced by the government to promote people's participation in the various developmental programmes. Though we find some repercussions of it on the community life, it could not totally replace the traditional Saora political structure.

The present tribal unrest in the agency tracts of Srikakulam district is based on the economic frustration of the tribals. The tribals of this area used to practise shifting cultivation as well as settled cultivation. Their fertile lands were taken away by the moneylenders and at present most of the tribals here are depending on shifting cultivation and wage labour. The moneylenders advance money to the tribal for a high rate of interest. The interest is generally 48% per year. Many of the tribals not only bequeath in debt and live in debt but also die in debt. Very few of the tribals are having wet lands, and these too are in very small landholdings. The forest officials and the police are habituated to bribes to allow them to continue shifting cultivation and liquor distillation as many of my informants told. It needs to be mentioned here that for all the Saora ceremonies and festivals liquor is a must. Some of the forest officials, unofficially ask every now and then the tribals to work as *Vetti* labourers (unpaid labourers) as a compensation for allowing them to cut some area of forest for shifting cultivation. The labour wages in the agency are considerably less. I found a labourer getting hardly Rs. 0.75 only after a day's hard work. It is hardly sufficient to support his family with the ever-increasing cost of the prices. I observed many a time that Saoras asking the contractors for high wages and the contractors refusing to increase.

All the afore-mentioned factors led to the frustration of the tribals. A few of my informants told me that they can no longer wait patiently. The only solution they said is to loot moneylenders and the rich men and recover their money by force. The Kannaiguda villagers' strong determination after a meeting on the day of announcement of election results to cut a few forest clearing and face the consequences as referred earlier, is a clear example of their reaction against the forest policy of the government.

The tribal unrest in Srikakulam district started a few months after the Fourth General Elections and is being continued even today. The tribals



involved in this unrest are the Saoras and the Jatapus. They are raiding the rich men's and moneylenders' houses and weapons like guns, bows, and arrows (most of the rich men here referred are contractors). They are all the time following the 'hit and run' tactics as reported by the newspapers. Though the Government of Andhra Pradesh stationed Social Reserve Police Staff at Elwin Peta Police Station, so far it could not gain any success in suppressing the unrest as the area is too difficult to enter and make arrests due to the hilly terrain.

The newspapers say that the Communist Party leaders inspired these tribals to create unrest. The present unrest is referred to as the 'Naxalite Activities'. Recently, on 16th June 1969, the Andhra Pradesh Government has issued a notification in this regard under the Suppression of the Disturbances Act. The three taluks of the agency of the Srikakulam district have been declared 'disturbed areas'. The taluks are Parvatipuram, Palakanda and Patapatnam. "The notification was necessitated by the increased 'Naxalite Activities' in the agency area during the recent months. Despite the deployment of additional police forces, in the 'Naxalite infested areas' in Srikakulam district, the 'hit and run' tactics of the Naxalities has been causing headache to the authorities...."

Government has, therefore, decided upon this 'drastic action' and issued the notification declaring the areas in disturbed conditions.

The unrest which first started at Mondemkallu area in Bhadragiri Girijan Panchayat Samiti spread to all adjoining parts of the agency areas in Parvatipuram, Palakonda and Patapatnam taluks.

I could not make any thorough study after the disturbances started and I mostly depended on the newspaper statements. However, from the observations, I made at the time of Fourth General Election, it can be said that the disturbances are as a result of the economic frustration of the tribals.

## Caste, Class and Leadership in a Himalayan District

BISWAJIT SEN

Contemporary changes in Kinnaur have created a few problems such as the (a) breakdown of traditional authority, (b) emergence of a new educated 'class', and (c) the operation of new political and social forces. On account of the re-scheduling of the Kinnaur population, the people have been divided into two groups: (i) the 'high caste' Khosla (Kanet-Rajput) group

among them has been declared as the Scheduled tribe, and (ii) the 'low caste' groups (Badhi, Domang and Chamang) have been declared as Scheduled Castes. The members of the newly formed educated 'class', represents big-landholders, business men, government officials. They function as a group to preserve their own interests.

Both the 'high caste' and 'low caste' groups are endogamous; marriage relation between a Demang and a Baddi is possible since both of them enjoy almost the same social status in the existing hierarchical order.

The traditional economy of the area was barter-oriented; this is now becoming cash-oriented. Moreover, the pattern of life is changing fast through education and opportunities of earning cash. An attempt has been made here to show the nature and extent of change in the traditional and emerging occupations.

Firstly, the 'high caste' group which controlled all the cultivable plots upto 1953 had to lose the ownership of a major part of cultivable lands in favour of the 'low caste' groups. This gives some idea the land holding position of the two. Secondly, due to the present inheritance rule all the sons have equal share, and due to monogamous marriages persons involved in it are breaking the fields into numerous smaller units. Due to change in traditional food habits locally produced foodgrains (inferior cereals like millets, barley, etc.) are gradually being replaced by rice and wheat which are difficult to grow in this region.

Out of the three artisan castes, the Domangs and Badhis are finding it difficult to continue their old profession, because the 'high caste' consumers have started using utensils made of metal. It is only for the metallic parts of their agricultural implements that they still depend on the artisans. For house construction work and furniture, people mostly engage carpenters from Rampur and other places to give them a modern-look. The Chamang caste have given up their old shoe-making business, yet they weave and stitch woollen clothings for which demand is still there.

Power has not shifted from the 'high caste' group to the 'low caste' groups. Though the traditional leadership which the village elders and the local *nambardars* (revenue-collectors) enjoyed so far, has slipped out of their hands, yet all the social, political and religious institutions are now controlled by the members of the 'high caste' community.

## Tribes in Transition: A Danger to National Integration

R.K. GULATI

The tribal situation in India needs careful handling by experts and reformers. The situation is similar in many ways to the 'Sword of Damocles'. Therefore, we have to pay attention to the following points:

1. Tribal development (without affecting their cultural build-up); and
2. The maintenance of national solidarity. The essential thing is not to 'uplift' tribals into a social and economic sphere to which they cannot adapt themselves, but to restore to them liberties of their own countryside. A.V. Thakkar has rightly remarked, "separation and isolation are dangerous theories, and strike at the root of national solidarity. Safety lies in 'Union' and not in 'Isolation'" (quoted in *Philosophy for N E F A* by Verrier Elwin, 1959, p. 29).

Their overall development *in the right direction* will be a very important contribution to their final integration within the framework of a United India.





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PART III

Discussions



FIRST BUSINESS SESSION

GENERAL BACKGROUND AND SITUATION IN  
NORTH-EAST INDIA

Monday (morning) 7th July 1969

Chairman-moderator : Prof. M. N. Srinivas

Rapporteur : Dr. B.N.Saraswati

- Speakers :
1. Dr. B. K. Roy Burman : 'Tribal Demography : A Preliminary Appraisal'.
  2. Dr. K. S. Mathur : 'Tribe in India : a problem of identification and integration'.
  3. B. Pakem : 'The socio-political systems of Jaintia tribe of Assam'.
  4. Rakshat Puri : 'Towards Security in the North-East Transportation and Nationalism'.

Participants : T. S. Negi, Surajit Sinha, Nityananda Das, L.M. Srikant, S.P. Sinha, M.N. Srinivas, Miss P. Pugh, A. Khan, N.K. Bose, T.N. Pandey, D.R. Mankekar, S. Mookerjee, Niharranjan Ray, S. D. Doshi, B. K. Roy Burman, Biswajit Sen, Sachchidanand, B.L. Abbi, L.P. Vidyarthi.

In his paper, ROY BURMAN drew attention to the problem of majority-minority complex in Tribal India at the levels of population, language, religion and participation in techno-economic development. He asserted that the tribals are in both majority and minority. For, if we consider them at the taluka level, we find that in altogether 287 talukas they constitute 50% or more of the total population, while they form only a small proportion (6.87%) of the population in India. It has also been found that almost 50% of the scheduled tribes population in India live in pockets where they are the majority people. He also noted that among the tribes bilingualism prevails considerably, and the bulk of the tribal population (89.40%) regard themselves as Hindus. In the context of their economy, he brought forth significant data regarding the low participation of the tribals in the total economy of the nation.

The discussion centred round the question of grouping the tribes at the taluka level and also on the definition of the term 'Scheduled tribe'. NEGI pointed out that although taluka is only an administrative unit, the concentration of a tribe in this unit does have an effect on the election and developmental programme. The case of Mallapuram taluka was also referred to in this context by SRINIVAS. SURJAIT SINHA raised a question : 'tribe' is a social category whereas 'Scheduled Tribe' is an administrative category, would the situation be different if we could lump them together? At this SRIKANT

and S. P. SINHA felt that there was already a confusion about the term tribe itself and, therefore, guidelines should be prepared for defining the term 'tribe' and 'Scheduled tribe' by a committee of administrators and anthropologists to be appointed by the government. DAS informed that according to the Government of India Act of 1935, there were 'defranchised' hillmen who were not necessarily tribes like the Doms or Punes in Orissa. In 1948-49, when the Thakkar Committee of the Constituent Assembly dealt with this issue of Scheduled Tribes, the states were asked to furnish a list, but it is patent that much thought was not applied to this issue. Immediately after 1950 there were clamours that many groups were excluded. In 1956, the Kalelkar Commission enlarged the list severalfold, but again there were representations that several groups had been left out. ROY BURMAN suggested that the question of scheduling the tribes be discussed separately at length by the Seminararians in the subsequent days.

MATHUR observed in his talk that the tribal problems in India had gained importance and deserved attention not only as a human problem but also as a political and administrative problem, because most of the tribal areas were of strategic and/or industrial importance. He further remarked that in pre-British India, tribes as such did not constitute a separate social category but were referred to as dwellers of hills and jungles and their 'tribal' names were used to identify them in much the same as caste. The British government introduced tribe as a classifying device and protected the tribals against the non-tribal Indians. This position has been retained in Independent India through with the objective of eventual integration. MATHUR opined that ethnically, linguistically and culturally the tribes of interior India are not distinguishable from their non-tribal neighbours. But tribal solidarity and tribal consciousness on the all-India level are becoming political tools for vested interests, and, instead of integration, are used to create separatist tendencies. Protection to economically and socially backward communities should be provided but not to the communities as a whole, only to the really backward sections.

A lively discussion followed MATHUR'S talk mainly on the question of integration and the response of the tribals. Bose, while explaining his views of integration compared the technologies of the so-called 'primitive' and 'advanced' people. Integration can take place at three distinguishable levels, namely, political, economic and cultural. What we have been aiming at in India is firstly, that the Scheduled Tribes should enjoy the same political rights and duties as shared by the rest of the Indian population. Secondly, we have set our mind to the creation of modernized productive organization in which there will be no caste and class barriers. We have yet to achieve this, and if the Scheduled Tribes join with us in this adventure, it will eventually bring about a feeling of comradeship which results from common enterprise in a noble cause. In case equality is actualized at these two levels, then we can leave 'culture' take its own course. We need not plan for that. We



can leave forms of culture according to their own judgement and inclination. With regard to technology, it is possible to compare one tribal culture with another. SARDINDU BOSE has studied the carrying capacity of land under shifting cultivation. The figures have varied from 15 to 30. In the same geographical area, production goes up if people take to plough cultivation. If there is division of labour, as under caste, it may support a larger number of people per square mile than under unspecialized agriculture and manual industries. It would be worthwhile in any case to go into detailed enquiries about the carrying capacity of different organizations of production. What is however suggested in the present context is that it is possible to draw distinctions between one community and another on the basis of this capacity to support peoples at a certain level of comforts. One thing which takes place when two productive systems of an unequal carrying capacity come into context with one another is this. Certain changes begin to take place in each of them; and much of the resulting phenomenon of cooperation and tension can be traced eventually to the original difference between the two systems.

MATHUR felt that participation in economy or politics was not integration, what was needed was 'emotional' integration.

MOOKERJEE was of the opinion that in a larger and ancient multi-cultural country like India a complete 'emotional' integration was hardly possible in a short period. Most other large countries like the USSR, USA and China had experienced this problem and solved it in different ways; small nationality groups in the USSR were integrated into the Russian nation-state by a careful process of promoting their individual cultural traits and developing their economy. We ought as well try to concede to small nationality groups like the Mizos some degree of administrative autonomy. On the response of the tribals towards integrating them into the main stream of Indian life, MOOKERJEE remarked that integration did not come about by the Presidential proclamations or constitutional reforms; it came through a sharing of common experience over a long period of years and that period had not elapsed in India's case yet. It was futile and unrealistic to expect and charge the tribal people to 'become integrated' with the rest of the Indian population rapidly when the more so-called sophisticated people in the rest of India had not become integrated themselves very well. Everywhere there were signs of disintegration and confusion, resulting often from inter-linguistic tension. The state borders in India have become almost like international frontiers. It was not easy for people from one state to have their children get education, jobs and even complete security in another state. If this was the picture in many parts of India today, how could we blame the tribals for not achieving quick integration?

On the question of growing tribal consciousness and separatist tendencies among the tribes, which places a barrier to national integration, MISS PUGH assured the house that in the demands of the people of NEFA there was no

element of anti-nationalism; what the people wanted was to become 'modern' and stand at par with the rest of the Indian people. MANKEKAR while sharing MISS PUGH's view stated that he did not take an alarmist view of the tribal situation: there was no difference between the self-identification demanded by the people of the NEFA, the Punjab or Telangana. He identified Indian political unrest with literacy and rising expectation accentuated by mass media. But MATHUR cautioned him against equating the Mizos and Jharkhand revolt with the problems of Telangana and the Punjabi Suba; for community revolt and territorial revolt were two different things.

SURAJIT SINHA invited attention to the existential realities and agreed with Mathur that the creation of political category by the government, called 'Scheduled tribe', intended to level up the gap between the so-called tribal groups and others in the country, had in effect contributed, almost partly, towards splitting up of the national community and re-inforced pluralism in the country.

Regarding the view that tribals were not treated as a separate category before the establishment of the British rule, KHAN, an historian, asserted that at least during the Mughal period, the administration maintained a clear cut distinction between the tribals, called *Sahara-nashinan*, and settled communities. The tribal chiefs were generally referred to as *arbaban* to distinguish them from *Zamindars*, the ordinary chiefs. From *Mazhar-i-Shahjahani*, a text recently published from Karachi, which provides interesting information on the working of the Mughal administration in Sind at the *Sarkar* and *Pargana* levels, one gets an impression that, normally, the relations between the Mughal state and the tribal peoples had no contractual basis. The tribals could be attacked and plundered by the *faujdars* at their will unless there were specific instructions to the contrary. Sometimes the peasant communities were also encouraged by the administration to attack and displace the tribals from their homes. RAY, however, expressed his doubt on the use of the term *Sahara-nashinan*, whether it stood for the tribes of all categories or only for the nomadic people of the desert.

Before closing the discussion, SRINIVAS queried, 'can we ask the government of India to do away with the terms Scheduled castes and Scheduled tribes?' He asked anthropologists to express their views on this question and to direct the discussion in the subsequent days to the issues of self-identification and history of tribal self-consciousness which will eventually throw light on the problems of integration.

PAKHEM described the socio-political systems of the Jaintia tribe of Assam. Being a Jaintia himself he presented the 'insider's view' of the prevailing conditions. His main points were: during the pre-British period political power rested with the people; the Jaintias had their traditional democratic institutions. But when the British came, the traditional power system was replaced by the Dollois under the protection of the British

authorities. After independence, the power system introduced by the British, was left intact, though new leadership came into existence under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India. In course of time, the new leadership assumed the powers of the traditional chief. But, because of various social systems, the people still retain political power to a large extent. The people's defiance of the government was indicated in the Jaintia District Council's elections. What people would like to have now is cultural autonomy, which would include language, customs, religion, democratic institutions and economic development as well, if they are to fight against any disturbances from across the border. This will help to integrate the Jaintia with the main stream of national life. However, that integration should be a two-way traffic and not in the nature of an imposition. This will help us to understand each other as friends and not as enemies.

The discussion which followed Pakem's paper was mostly aimed at seeking clarifications. ROY BURMAN provided supplementary information regarding the Regional Councils, the District Councils, conflicting points in taxation policy in Khasis and Jaintia Hills, the Jaintias' grievances against the Khasis, and how the District Council failed to formulate a policy in the interest of the people. PAKEM noted these points and stated further that a non-statutory Regional Council or Committee for Jaintia Hills might have existed, of which he was not aware of. But, he said, under the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution of India, there was no Regional Council for Jaintia Hills. He asserted that the Khasis wanted to impose tax on the Jaintias which led the latter to think in terms of separating themselves from the Khasis.

SEN asked on how it was that the modern leadership of the educated minority was in conflict with the traditional leadership? He also questioned Pakem's suggestion that while the people should be left to choose their religion and cultural autonomy, effective steps should be taken to break through their economic isolation or else the people will be forced to establish their economic contacts with East Pakistan, PAKEM'S answer was that in the traditional system, the Dollois, who were elected directly by the people, ruled according to popular opinion and represented the traditional leadership at a higher level; at the village level, there was a village headman called *Waheh Chneng*. But some of the modern educated leaders organized under the APHLC try to take away power from the hands of the traditional chiefs. He reaffirmed his earlier statement that the Jaintias had been mixing with Hindu as well as Muslim neighbours for centuries without being converted. Although influences of these religions were there, it was like meeting of the two rivers which currents remained identifiable. He further clarified that not only economy would be a decisive factor in inducing the people to look across the border, there were political reasons as well; but, if there were peace with Pakistan, the question of establishing economic relations with East Pakistan would not bother them much.

SACHCHIDANAND wanted Pakem to spell out his idea of integration clearly so that effective modes of integration may be discussed thoroughly in the Seminar. He also wanted to know the nature of the Jaintia tribal democracy. PAKEM maintained his earlier position regarding the 'cultural autonomy' and the traditional democracy of the Jaintias, as well as the need of mutual understanding between the tribals and the non-tribals. He affirmed that, in practice, the traditional political system of the Jaintias was of oligarchic nature.

SRINIVAS, from the chair, took up further the question about tribal views of integration raised earlier by Sachchidanand, and requested the assembly to discuss what they actually meant by integrating the tribes. He said that in the nineteen thirties and forties there was lot of talks in the USA, about Americanization, but they have since changed their viewpoint considerably to accommodate the idea of 'respect for other cultures'. He further appealed to the Seminar to take the opportunity to educate themselves by the views of the tribal participants.

The burden of PURI'S argument on the question of security in the North-east was that the tribal people must be brought out of their isolation into the mainstream of Indian nationalism. For this purpose, there was a need for easy transportation and communication with the region as well as between the region and other parts of India. But the topography of the region was hostile to the speedy development of transportation facilities under the present economic and political limitations, and the cost would be prohibitive. A less expensive alternative would be to follow the natural inclination of the mountains and rivers for transportation for which an arrangement would be necessary for unobstructed movement through East Pakistan.

The discussion that followed centred upon the opening of communication routes and their strategic importance. ROY BURMAN drew attention of the speaker towards the problem of access to Manipur through Pakistan and referred to Gillet's suggestion of riverine channel through Burma. MANKEKAR gave a lucid topographical description of the region and hinted that the Chinese might join with Pakistan through the Chumbi valley. He also emphasized the importance of Siliguri in that strategic situation and the need of attending to the communication problem was very important for security purposes. While he expressed his satisfaction over the improvement in the network of communication in Nagaland, he felt that in the case of Mizoland, things were very different. The lack of communication was responsible for the increasing frustration in Mizoland. He believed that the Mizoland's discontent was largely man made.

A number of participants questioned the feasibility of PURI'S suggestion of opening of communication through East Pakistan and for that matter of the necessity of compromise with Pakistan. ABBI wondered whether communication through Pakistan would not promote the integration of the region



with passage through another country to maintain contact with its won people? SRINIVAS intervening at this point, put forward a suggestion to separate the issue of communications from that of peace with Pakistan. To say that peace with Pakistan is necessary for opening of communications in North-eastern India is to assume something over which we do not have sole control. We may have peace with Pakistan but not because we have difficulty in laying a network of communications in our North-eastern border regions.

SRIKANT was of the opinion that the communication facilities in tribal areas were not always unmixed blessings. Exploitation was going on in the areas where communication had been made easy. In this context, ROY BURMAN commended the policy of the Russians for the protection of the minority against exploitation. But PURI replied that the problems of national minorities in China and Russia were very different from those in India. There 'national minorities' were not tribes. In China, Tibetans were not considered as a tribe.

VIDYARTHI felt that the question of communication in Nagaland or NEFA could not be viewed merely as a regional human problem, it had to be examined from the points of view of national security which could be fruitfully dealt with by defence experts. "As social scientists, our immediate task is to examine the problem of separatist movements and the concept of national integration", he said.

From the chair, SRINIVAS said in conclusion: 'In the forthcoming sessions we as sociologists may profitably discuss at least three important problems, viz. (1) what should be the policy for the border tribes and inland tribes, (2) the role of bureaucracy in tribal India, and (3) a comparative study of minority strategically important problems in southeast Asia.'

## DEVELOPMENTS IN NORTH-EAST INDIA

Monday (afternoon) 7 July, 1969

Chairman-Moderator: Prof. M.N. Srinivas  
 Rapporteur: Dr. Satish Saberwal

- Speakers :
- (1) Dr. M. Aram: 'The Emerging Situation in Nagaland and Some Suggestions for a National Policy'.
  - (2) Dr. Saradindu Bose: 'Impact of Changing Conditions on the economy of the high altitude people'.
  - (3) Natwar Thakkar: 'Some Observations on the last Elections and Electioneering in Nagaland'.

Participants: N. Thakkar, Miss Leno, D.R. Mankekar, Nihar-ranjan Ray, Alamchiba Ao, N.K. Bose, M.N. Srinivas, Satish Seberwal, L.P. Vidyarthi, D.P. Sinha, T.N. Pandit.

The Naga situation in recent years, ARAM asserted, had been changing rapidly. While it has many aspects, it is primarily a psycho-cultural problem, born in the Naga quest for self-identity in the context of an Indian polity, which was itself dynamic, that is, one undergoing changes.

Among the salient attributes of the contemporary Naga situation is the widespread support and co-operation in the cause of Peace, a "magic word" in Nagaland. This desire has grown out of a decade of strife, and every peace anniversary is a cause for celebration. This is reflected in the growing strength of the civil administration, the wide participation in the elections (as Thakkar was to illustrate later), and a general reaching out to the world beyond.

Several participants demurred to the qualities both of the peace desired and of the commitment to it. In a context of heavy governmental spending, does it represent merely a search for jobs and incomes without the intent to participate purposively in the Indian Union? MRS LENO, a Naga herself said that it was born of a weariness at 'living in a very disorderly social situation' for many years, a search for some security; but in this context the presence of units of the Indian army in villages was a continual irritant: 'Are we going to have the Indian Army there for ever?' she asked, ARAM commented that the strength of the Army in Nagaland had been halved at the time of the 1965 conflict with Pakistan but, later, with the reported approach of rebels after training in China, the original levels had been restored or even, possibly,

exceeded. He hoped, however, that, with the growing strength of the Nagaland State Police, the civil government would be strong enough for the army to withdraw increasingly to its core function of defending the international borders.

In reply to MANKEKAR'S query as to whether this urge to peace implied any change in the aspiration to sovereignty and independence, previously characteristic of all rebel leaders, whether "moderate" or "militant," ARAM said that their attitude did seem to be undergoing change, largely in response to changing Naga public opinion. The "Federal" leaders have recently been saying that they would accept whatever settlement the Naga people wanted. The Naga Public Conference was a forum facilitating the emergence of political consensus there. He urged the liberal public opinion in India to be sympathetic towards the present policy of peace in Nagaland, which should continue.

While THAKKAR was later to assert that the village continued to be a well-knit unit, with traditional authority still powerful and effective, ARAM stressed that the community feeling was on the decline and a sense of individualism was growing; this entails loss of valuable community attributes but offers a more 'liberal' environment for individual growth.

What worried some participants was ARAM'S comment on the growing economic disparities in Nagaland: While the educated men in the administration and the contractors do well of the crores being spent there by the government, ten miles away from the principal administrative centres one sees few benefits arising out to this expense. For the future, perhaps, these disparities are storing up tensions which could fuel strife. The distribution of developmental benefits required empirical study; several discussants asked pertinent questions: do developmental discontinuities reflect the still unsettled conditions in the interior. If land was previously owned communally, what are consequences of the super-imposition of disparities arising from other sources on this? Do village, clan and other traditional loyalties, whose presence THAKKAR later asserted, promote the redistribution of wealth. THAKKAR said that feasts and sacrifices did make for such redistribution.

NIHARRANJA RAY said that the principal beneficiaries from the developmental programmes were Angamis and, to a lesser extent, Aos who, thanks to missionary activity, were better educated and knew English. RAY saw this as a consequence of the "mixed economy" that is Indian. AO said that in Nagaland there is no exploitation of one section of the people by another section of the magnitude we know of in other parts of India. It is correct to say that the Angamis, Aos, Semas and Lothas are more advanced in education but it does not mean that they exploit the backward tribes in Tuensang district. It is the policy of the state government to give preference to the more backward tribes in matter of employment and some persons from these areas are even employed without interview. As far as practicable even contract works are

also given to the local people. SURAJIT SINHA, anticipating tribal areas, asked: "How can we raise alarm about them if we do nothing to reduce disparities in the wider Indian society?" THAKKAR later said that highly educated men in Nagaland has taken to contractroing and had contested elections.

PROF BOSE, noting Aram's report that violence had proved ineffective from the Naga viewpoint and that constitutional methods were not leading to entirely satisfactory results either, called attention to the third method suggested by Gandhiji, namely non-cooperation blended with constructive work. Can these be tried in seeking to build an exploitation—free and just society in Nagaland, particularly since Jayaprakashji was one of the members of the Original Peace Mission? Could, then, the revolutionary teaching of Gandhiji be re-born in Nagaland, for the rest of India to emulate? ARAM replied in a cautious affirmative: one imprisoned Naga leader was currently fasting in supports of his position.

ARAM called for sympathetic consideration of the current Naga demands for a separate regiment in the Army, a separate Governor, a separate High Court. Concerning the costs and the benefits of some of these demands, the discussants had divergent views. ARAM urged that the present grants and subsidies should be continued —and attempts made to ensure a more equitable distribution for them.

ARAM felt that the history of the underground movement required close attention from the scholars : substantial records were available for this. RAY reported that the bulk of relevent official records continued to be classified, thus inhibiting vigorous enquiry. In a tangential comment, drawing on the *Mau Mau* uprising in Central Kenya during the mid-fifties, SABERWAL urged upon the participants the value of personal documents, such as autobiographies, elicited from those who had participated in the Naga uprising: the volume of *Mau Mau* from within, a result of collaboration between a *Mau Mau* leader, Karuri N-jama, and an anthropologist, Donald Barnett, is an example of what could be achieved (1966, New York, Monthly, Review Press). SRINIVAS suggested that this might be considered as a method-ological recommendation of the Seminar. Drawing upon the same experience, SABERWAL suggested that sustained violence of this sort inevitably and irreversibly loosended the social fibre. Also, he suggested that this experience would now become an important part of the Naga tradition and predicted its embodiment in the political rhetoric in the area, for use both internally in Nagaland and externally in relation to Assam and India at large.

NATAWAR THAKKAR addressed himself to the adequacy of the Elections in Nagaland and to economic situation among the tribes in North-east India compared to other major tribal regions of the country. Summarizing the development of electoral politics in Nagaland since the state's inauguration in 1964, THAKKAR focussed on the very high voting levels there (over



78%) during the 1969 elections. Several factors contributed to this outcome: the general feeling of security and the assurance that the polling will be peaceful; the intensity of electioneering by candidates aware of the use of power; the tendency to vote on the basis of group decisions and group loyalties. While the high rate of participation was welcome, the value of electioneering at large large remained ambiguous: given the exploitation of local and group loyalties for voting, were elections really an unmixed blessing? The answers would come best from Naga leaders themselves, who, unfortunately, were not participating in the Seminar.

These issues evoked vigorous comment. D.P. SINHA wondered whether official coercion might have helped to inflate the voting percentage, thus making it invalid as an indicator of popular participation in the elections. THAKKAR reassured discussants that the voting had been entirely voluntary, free of official coercion. MANKEKER suggested that voting in Nagaland has been much freer than is the practice in Bombay. Following up PANDIT's comment that voting throughout India is strongly influenced by the advice of group leaders, SRINIVAS said that in India we often have not individual but block voting; but the question remained: why did the block leaders in Nagaland choose to vote?

THAKKAR sought to explain the situation in terms of the great capacity Nagas have for political organization. He was optimistic about the Naga capacity to work a 'democratic' policy : in Nagaland. They need education: the radio is helpful, but they have no newspapers yet. He was optimistic about Naga accommodation within Indian Union in the long run. He also stated that the proposed North-East Regional Council affairs to be a wise and foresighted step and hoped that the Nagas with their practical outlook towards life will also appropriate the underlying advantages and will cooperate towards its smooth functioning.

Concerning the economic situation THAKKAR asserted that, in contrast with the tribal groups elsewhere in India, those in the northeast region do not get exploited by plainsmen: they are much happier, more prosperous, and freer than tribesmen elsewhere. All contracts in Nagaland are being managed by Nagas. In any of the major Naga tribe one can expect to find 5-6 men with a lakh of rupees in cash and any number of people with a thousand rupees. In response to a query about Marwar traders, he said they are not functioning as money lenders in Nagaland. They work in shops rented at very high rates from Naga owners; they have a tendency to inflate prices, but these evoke strong and effective local sanctions. They cannot be said to be exploiting the Nagas much. Responding to another query he said that state-owned paper and sugar mills were being planned for the area; but machine manufacturing at this time is limited to rice hullers and raw mills, owned largely by Aos, in a few places : this is partly because electricity is available only in a few places.

D.P. SINHA called attention to the diversity of perceptions of the Naga

situation presented by ARAM, MRS. LINO and THAKKAR. VIDYARTHI, in support, wondered whether the views presented did not underplay the complexity of the situation: closer scrutiny of the attitudes of non-leaders in the many Naga groups would show significant contrasts to the leader's attitudes. He also wondered where the inspiration for the high rate of voting came from. SRINIVAS felt that the diversity of perceptions and viewpoints was entirely to be expected.

SARADINDU BOSE presented a show of slides before summarizing his paper, *Impact of changing conditions on the economy of the high altitude people*,\* dealing with (1) the Gaddis of Chamba: pastoralists, with limited agriculture, and almost no trade; (2) the Marcha of the Garhwal region who engage in all three activities; and (3) the Bhot of Northern Sikkim: agriculturists, with subsidiary interest in pastoralism and trade. The differences in their economic pursuits were, he thought, ecologically conditioned but, upon query, conceded that different historical experience may have contributed to them.

The 1962 war with China ended the Tibet trade. This hurt the Bhots most, for their flocks were in Tibet at the time of hostilities and stayed there. On the other hand the rapid opening up of the regions in recent years has changed the modes—and the ownership—of the means of transport and communication, displacing the former owners of mules. Also since trucks carrying goods to the hill regions return more or less empty, transport charges are high. Besides, the outlay on—and employment from—development works is seasonal. Among the solutions to the mountain peoples economic impasse, DR. BOSE recommended the formation of transport co-operatives.

Responding to comments by ROY BURMAN and NIHARRANJAN RAY, BOSE conceded that the various streams provide channels for communication in the Western Himalayas, which have consequently been less isolated historically, than the eastern areas. ROY BURMAN commented that in Garhwal the building of roads had opened up new opportunities, for horticulture, and the Bhotias had been selling their lands to outside horticulturalists. To control this alienation of land, he has recently urged the designation of Bhorias as a Scheduled Tribe.

\* See A Summary of the remaining papers—Editor

## SECOND BUSINESS SESSION

## TRIBAL SITUATION IN THE WESTERN HIMALAYAS

Tuesday morning July 8, 1969

Chairman-moderator : Professor S.C. Dube

Rapporteur : Dr. B.N. Saraswati

Speakers :

- (1) Dr. B.N. Saraswati : 'Cultural re-integration of Ladakh'
- (2) D.N. Dhir : 'Tribes on the North-West Border of India (West Himalayas)'
- (3) J.S. Negi : 'The Tribal Situation in Himachal Pradesh'.

Participants :

B.K. Roy Burman, T.N. Pandit, B.L. Abbi, Niharranjan Ray, J.S. Uberoi, T.N. Pandey, Biswajit Sen, D.R. Mankekar, D.P. Sinha, K.S. Mathur, L.P. Vidyarthi, B.B. Goswami, N.K. Bose, A.K. Saran, Barun De, S.P. Sinha, S.C. Dube, L.M. Srikant, M.N. Srinivas, N. Das, R.N. Haldipur, D.D. Kapoor.

In his talk on the cultural re-integration of Ladakh, SARASWATI\* opined that the root of the unrest in Ladakh was laid essentially in the Buddhists' apprehension of losing their cultural identity on account of the proselytizing activities of the Moslems with whom they had been politically integrated in the Moslem majority state of Jammu & Kashmir as also in the crisis in traditional relationships following the Chinese conquest of Tibet. Analysing the four characteristics used by the Ladakhis in their 'self-identification', he held that political integration of Ladakh with Jammu & Kashmir was unjust and wrong; linguistically and culturally and racially the only part of India with which it should have been integrated was the Himalayan district of Lahaul and Spiti which was also once its part and which also forms part of the Ladakh's 'self-identifiable' territory. He further commented that political integration was an incomplete process of national integration since it had apparently failed to integrate cultures of divergent patterns of the areas of diverse cultures. Speaking of the two methods of cultural integration, viz. the Christian and Islamic method of proselytization and the Hindu method of integration, he said that unlike the former, the methods employed in Hinduism did not stress the unification of character; on the contrary it allows different cultures to be autonomous. Ladakh has obviously revolted against the Moslem's method of cultural integration. The problem of cultural integration of Ladakhis through the Hindu mode does not arise at this point of time, for Ladakh was an integral part of India as early as 243 BC. What is actually needed in the present case is the revival of the memories of their old relationship and the

reaffirmation of the cultural ties which were broken in the complex cycle of events.

The talk was followed by a sustained discussion on the Hindu method of integration and the desirability of considering religion and culture as a factor in political integration. ROY BURMAN also pointed out that there was a conflict among the Buddhist themselves and the present crisis was mainly because of the differences in traditional and modern leaders. SARSWATI's reply was that he was not concerned how the Ladakhis organized their agitation and what were the factions among them; his main point of interest was 'what for the Ladakhis agitate?' But he noted Roy Burman's point of information regarding the Noor Bakshi sect in which the process of reversion to Buddhist faith from Moslem converts has taken place in Ladakh.

UBEROI and MATHUR were of the opinion that ethno-linguistic features or traditional religion could not form the basis of a political society. On this argument PANDIT from Kashmir asserted that Ladakh could not be separated from Jammu & Kashmir for political reasons. But referring to the communal tension in Ladakh, MANKEKAR pointed out that in the prevailing political conditions in the country everyone tried to think in terms of ultimate ethnic basis. Considering the strategy, he added we must admit that Ladakh's main communication route will have to be opened through Lahaul. He also mentioned Sheikh Abdullah's statement regarding the formation of Kashmir valley as an independent state while Jammu & Kashmir should go to India.

While the discussion was thus directed towards the political organization of Ladakh, RAY invited the attention towards the historical realities. He said that in the analysis of the thing we must not forget that the geo-political location of Ladakh was very important. Because of political vicissitudes Ladakh has been tied up with Kashmir only recently. And although it was in interaction with India since 8th century AD, Tibet, in fact, has all along been much integrated with Ladakh. He, however, suggested that politics would take care of its own course. In the end he explained how religion plays an important role in the emerging situation in Ladakh and how the vested interest of the *Lamas* and the *Gompas* (monasteries) which occupy considerable portion of land retarded the economic growth of Ladakh. Depicting the geographical lay-out of the north-south division in Ladakh, he remarked that within Ladakh religion is significantly coextensive with territory.

VIDYARTHI pointed out the process of Tibetization in Ladakh and commented that Saraswati had tried to understand the problem of Ladakh in cultural-contact situation. Ladakh was disturbed by Islamic invasion as well as by Hindu cultural conquest, the historical images of which the Ladakhis have preserved. The Hindu method of cultural integration and its impact on the society has also been adumbrated. He suggested that the terms 'violent' and 'non-violent' methods in cultural conquest may be used for the phenomena described by Saraswati.



Regarding the Hindu mode of integration a number of participants felt that it is not advisable to take recourse to this method in integrating the tribes of India into the mainstream of Indian life. UBEROI suggested that the right method for the integration of Ladakh or any other area into the Federal Republic of India as a whole should be through secular-ism, democracy and socialism. Taking this issue further SARAN contended that in Hindu method there is no democracy of culture, as stated by Saraswati, and we should not call the method of absorption as Hindu method. SURAJIT SINHA also felt that it would have been more meaningful to talk of two processes as 'directed' and 'voluntary' than of Christian and Hindu methods of 'conversion' and 'absorption'.

SEN emphasised that in Ladakh the Buddhist Ladakhis (Leh sub-division) and the Muslim Ladakhis (Kargil sub-division) had different problems. In Leh religious intolerance is evidenced from the fact that in the Muslim villages there are mosques and even in the district headquarters of Ladakh there is a mosque. But in Kargil, when a monastery was about to be built the Muslim Ladakhis resisted it.

Regarding inter-marriage between a Buddhist and a Muslim a marriage between a Buddhist boy and a Muslim girl poses no problem because the spouse is free to follow her religious practices. But a marriage between a Muslim boy and a Buddhist girl poses a problem as she has to follow her husband's religion.

The Buddhist Ladakhis would like to come close to New Delhi for better protection but the Muslim Ladakhis would prefer to remain close to Jammu & Kashmir.

DE was concerned that the concept of Sanskritization, which Dr. Saraswati quoted from Professor Srinivas, was sprouting a new concept. He suggested that the categorization of Ladakhi culture as a culture of the hills should be viewed in terms of its cultural contacts across the Himalayas, not only with Kashmir but also with Sinkiang. He referred to a concept that Uberoi had used privately with him, that of a 'swivel-door culture of the hills in Central Asia' in which hill cultures were linked to the model of a swivel-door in which people entered from various directions, not one. People could make a composite culture in such a situation. Referring to Roy Burman's data about marriages between Buddhists and Moslems, he said that in such a culture, the urge for self-identification need not be with the contiguous province which might be identified with aggression (e.g. Saraswati's data about the role of Zorawar Singh in Ladakh), but with either the concept of regional autonomy or the concept of central control from Delhi, e.g. Kushak Bakula's identification with Parliament. It was to meet such situation that the soviets in the Lenin period had evolved the instrument of autonomous regions in the Soviet constitution. This model shorn of its Stalinist connotation might be useful for its relevance to modern Indian tribal problems or the borders.

N.K. BOSE remarked, "We are trying to decide the fate of a people without asking them what actually they themselves want. Have we the right to impose our religious belief over others? Do the people of Ladakh have no right to decide their fate because of our strategic requirements? What should be done to Ladakh?"

ABBI wanted to know what was actually happening in Ladakh which made the Buddhists and the Moslems quarrel. To this query, Saraswati replied that the forcible conversion of Buddhists to Islamic faith was the main cause of Buddhist-Moslim conflict in Ladakh. He claimed that during the visit of Ladakh in 1964 he collected a number of cases in which Buddhists had been converted by forcible and fraudulent method.

Concluding the discussion from the chair, DUBE remarked that there was a danger in using the term 'Hindu' in secular sense in social sciences. If the issue has to be decided politically it may necessarily bring political confusion. There have been instances when history has been twisted in support of cessation. He agreed with BOSE that people should be allowed to choose. He finally asserted that a conscious role had to be permitted to the elite.

While presenting his paper, DHIR addressed himself mainly to the question of scheduling of castes and tribes. He elucidated the various levels of deliberations and procedural complications. The main burden of his argument was that the whole system of 'scheduling', as it came into existence for the first time, was gone through in a somewhat hurried manner resulting in some people who deserved to be included being left out. Since backwardness has a tendency to perpetuate, in course of time, vested interest in these classes have grown. Some of the groups whose condition has since been ameliorated resisted to be excluded while the State could not go on adding to the lists at infinitum. The castes and tribes who have been scheduled have given rise to a sort of 'privileged class' occupying positions on concessions and reservations, and this naturally frustrates other groups who in actual fact are more backward but have not been or could not be scheduled. Citing the example of the Thakurs of Lahaul and Negis of Kinnaur he maintained that both these tribes, who were now educationally and economically far better off than quite a few other groups in the vicinity or the surroundings, merited to be de-scheduled so that the funds available could be spent in a concentrated way upon relatively more backward classes. He added that even at places there was so-called exploitation by the tribals of the non-tribals, and cited the example of Manali (Kulu) where bulk of the property was now owned by the rich Lahaulis.

NEGI argued with Dhir in his talk on the tribal situation in Himachal Pradesh. There are vested interests even among the tribals and there is need for the revision of the list of the backward classes. He also suggested an independent study of this problem by a team of experts. In his opinion the

system of scheduling should be economic. While accepting that in some cases there have been improvement, he held that protective measures some cases there have been improvement, he held that protective measures are still necessary. He however vehemently contradicted Dhir's allegation that in some cases the tribals are exploiting non-tribals.

The discussion which followed the two papers confined itself to the question of 'scheduling'. There was a general agreement among the participants that on account of the vested interest the very purpose of scheduling has been defeated. DAS was of the opinion that most of the state governments enlarged the list of the Scheduled Tribes in order to get more financial assistance from the Central Government. The amount of the grants depends on the number of the tribes in a state. SRIKANT informed that the Mysore Government had sent a note to the Centre that excepting the Brahmans all the groups in Mysore should be levelled backward. DHIR added that while in Mysore at one time as much as 68% of the population was declared as backward, to be entitled to concessions and reservations which were available to the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, in the state of Jammu and Kashmir in a proposed bill as high as 80% of the population was so proposed to be included in the list of Backward Classes. At this point the house enjoyed an anecdote which BOSE related: there was a move in the Backward Classes Commission of Kaka Kalelkar to declare all the women of India as 'backward'.

MANKEKAR agreed that competition to be labelled 'backward' often led to agitation as was evident from the case of the Lingayats. Therefore, the very question of backward has to be reviewed carefully. Let us have a dead line for this 'backward' scheduling, by which the states must bring them all forward. In the name of backwardness a lot of inefficiency and dishonesty goes on. HALDIPUR was of the opinion that from the point of view of purely economic backwardness, every group in the country would, probably, fall under the category and would have to be brought under the schedule. The intention of scheduling was to bring the under-privileged classes in line with the others. Today, within the scheduled castes and tribes themselves there are some groups which are far more backward than the others who have taken some advantage of the constitutional provision already. The trouble is that we start deliberating nearly at the end of the ten year period when one has to take a decision whether these privileges should be continued or not. Descheduling the scheduled tribes should be a continuous process depending upon the progress made by some sub-groups and concentration is needed on the remaining groups within a schedule. Last minute remedies are difficult to find. SRIKANT informed that according to the provisions scheduled can be changed at any time but reservation cannot be changed.

On the question of finding out the solution, PANDIT said that the essential task of the social scientist is to assess the merits or demerits of reservation. The question is who should have the actual role of listing the

tribes. Politicians are governed by their own interest. The best person would be perhaps, the social scientists and the administrators. In his context SRINIVAS remarked that we should not always blame the politicians. The political dimension is not constant. We can change the views of the politicians. And for that the social scientists must write in the Press and get their views disseminated in the general public. He also referred to the allegations made against the anthropologists that they want to keep the tribes as museum specimens. To remove this misconception, he suggested reading Ghurye's commendable work, *The Aborigines*. Regarding the question of scheduling, he felt that it was too late now to attack the 'schedule'. All these days we have been seeking nominalistic solutions of the problem. In whatever manner we define 'tribe' or 'caste', let us find out real solutions. By levelling a group as Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe, the problem is not automatically solved. He reminded the seminar that the 'Scheduled Castes' are not a homogeneous group and that this problem of growing heterogeneity will have to be stopped. He concluded that we should try to evolve rational criteria for determining the economic backwardness.

Reacting to the question on the role of social scientists, VIDAYARTHI said that we were dealing with planned social and cultural change. Being a student of social change, we must not forget that the process of change had been in operation even before Independence. Anthropologists know what has happened in the transformation of tribals. The conditions are not everywhere the same, there are local variations in contexts and situations. Therefore, we cannot project an all-India model into local situation. Let us talk about the section in terms of primitive pockets. Keeping this in view if we examine the conditions of the tribals in different regions of India or even within the region, we will find that changes brought to them have been unequal. Certain regions are taking the lion's share in the developmental benefits whereas several pockets are becoming more and more primitive. This problem of unequal technological change in the tribal areas needs our immediate attention. The question is of now or never.

Besides the general issues such as scheduling, specific problems were also raised. ROY BURMAN raised the question of the strata and castes in Kinnaur and cited similar instances from Pangi and asked whether the Chamang and Damang were castes. KAPOOR explained the position with respect of Kinnaur and said that Chamang and Damang were strata in the tribal society of Kinnaur and not castes in the Hindu caste system. He pointed out that their scheduling in the list of castes is anomalous. To this NEGI replied that the question of Chamang and Damang has been wrongly recorded by the Census. They were not asked whether they are Kinnauras. DHIR also revealed that the Gaddis are Scheduled Tribes in one part of Himachal Pradesh, while in another area they are a Scheduled Caste.



ROY BURMAN further gave a lucid account of the social structure of the people of Kinnaur. He said, 'one cannot speak of Kinnaur as a homogeneous entity, there are diverse regions, there are upper and lower castes, as also upper and lower classes'. He also explained the role of the temple which is very important in the class structure of the area.

TUESDAY, AFTERNOON, JULY 8, 1969

Chairman-Moderator : Professor S.C. Dube

Rapporteur : Dr. Satish Saberwal

Speakers: (1) Biswajit Sen : 'Caste, class and leadership in a Himalayan District (Kinnaur).'  
(2) D. Kapoor: 'The People of Kinnaur'.

Participants: K.S. Mathur, Sachchidanand, D. Kappor, B.K. Roy Burman, D.M. Dhir, N.K. Bose, T.N. Pandit, Haldipur, J.P.S. Uberoi, S. Bhattacharya, Niharranjan Ray, Surajit Sinha, M.N. Srinivas.

SEN'S paper\* drew a critical comment from K.S. MATHUR, SACHCHIDANANDA and D.KAPOOR. Sen had used 'standard' categories—academic or official—in his analysis such as 'Scheduled Tribes', 'Scheduled Castes', 'high caste', 'low caste' and classes which were artificial. Use of local terms and categories prior to the use of standard terms might help in delineating "the ground situation...clearly". Additional data were necessary concerning (a) superordination and subordination of groups, and (b) economic relations in the area which seemed to be analogous to the 'jajmani' in the North Indian plains. Sen's account was based on inadequate and/or inaccurate data; the errors include: (a) characterizing them as isolated when they have long had trading relations with Tibet, with various Himachali districts, and with Dehra Dun; (b) the failure to include low caste men among the 'villagers' they should be so included since they too work for the village deity; and (c) characterizing the castes as landless when the Revenue records show that they did possess land saying that educated Kinnauris lack interest in shepherding when in fact there are instances of their being avid shepherds.

KAPOOR, ROY BURMAN and DHIR called attention to the anomalies arising from the facts that the Kinnaur area was declared to be one of Scheduled Tribes, while you have a caste system functioning there. Consequently, the high castes here are known as Scheduled Tribes and low castes—some 13,000 people in all—are listed as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes at the same time. It was asserted that a small number of Negi families control a very large proportion of offices and opportunities in the district. Other points made include: Kinnaur is a highly heterogeneous area with much intra-regional variation (Roy Burman), and the new roads and the location of army units here had opened up new opportunities: there was no problem of educated unemployment (Dhir).

N.K. BOSE told the house about the practice of untouchability in Sangla (a

\*See A Summary of remaining papers—Editor

village in Kinnaur). Neither the Hindu nor the Buddhist temple there admits the 'low' castes who have a separate temple in their own quarter of the town. In the courtyard of the Nag Devi temple, the 'low' castes do dance, but they may not enter the sanctum of the temple. Separately, the 'upper' castes also dance there during celebrations. When Srikantji was Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, he once made the groups dance together. After his departure, there was an oracle which pronounced the 'low' castes guilty and they had to pay a fine.

PANDIT made some remarks on the political and ethnic situation in relation to the tribes of Jammu & Kashmir (but not Ladakh). The two major tribal groups here are: Gujjars and Bakarvals. They are dispersed well beyond the borders of Jammu & Kashmir. Locally, they cultivate and migrate with their buffalo herds in search of pastures. They have particular rituals associated with the various points of encampment. Their language is distinct from that of their neighbours, but Pandit could not identify it definitely. While the Gujjars live at a subsistence level, the other tribal group, the Bakarval are wealthier. Owing to the extensive litigation, centring on women, they lay themselves open to exploitation by money-lenders. Although the two groups are aware of their ethnic distinctiveness, the Bakarvals dominate over the Gujjars in the context of an alliance.

These groups had good relations with the Maharaja in pre-Independence days. During the 1965 war with Pakistan, some Gujjars had been very valuable sources of intelligence; their political orientation need not be taken to be pro-Pakistani.

Several discussants made supplementary comments. DHIR had done a socio-economic survey of the two tribes: they total 3.5 million people. One minister and one deputy minister represent them in the state ministry and have been agitating for S.T. status for them in any case special programmes for them currently cost several lakh rupees a year. After tracing their movements in the subcontinent since their initial immigration from Central Asia in the 6th century, DHIR said that their principal current problems were: (1) Very low educational levels. The experiment with mobile schools had run into problems with both teachers and students. (2) Skirmishes with the Forest Department. (3) Hygienically very poor living conditions. (4) Poor quality of livestock. On all these fronts remedial action was being attempted.

Characterizing the Gujjars as an international community (?) found in India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Soviet Central Asia, UBEROI asserted that "their language, at least in the last two countries, is Punjabi as spoken in Gujarkhan tehsil in Pakistan". The All-India Gujar Federation estimates their total number at eight million. In view of the very diverse adaptations of this very interesting community, it should be studied thoroughly: its importance is likely to increase.

In presenting his paper *The People of Kinnaur: an essay in the problem*

of tribe. D KAPOOR made brief references to the concept of 'tribe' and to the ethnography of Kinnaur. He noted that the discrepancies between the various published accounts and also between his own observations in different areas could be explained only on the basis of cultural differences between different parts of Kinnaur. It is customary to divide the district on the grounds of ecology (into wet and dry zones) and of dialectical differences into the four areas so demarcated by I G Bailey; he had felt the need to add a fifth, Sumehu.

Concerning stratification in the district, Kapoor discussed briefly three groups: the Kanet (or 'Rajpur'), the Damang, and the Ch'amang; each of these groups could be separately identified as a 'tribe' at one level of definition even though all Kinnaura together comprise a 'tribe' at another level.

Kapoor's paper provoked NIHARANJAN RAY and BHATTACHARYA to question the basis on which he had delineated the five dialectical regions. In his reply KAPOOR said that Bailey had previously noted four dialects and their regional distribution; his own contribution consisted in recognizing a fifth area, Sumehu implicit in the work of Branderth and Joshi, and in delimiting its boundaries on the basis of mutual non-intelligibility with standard Kinnauri and Theborskad.

To SURAJI SINHA, the Kinnauri system of stratification appeared to be of a piece with the Hindu caste system, except that Kinnaur had only a few 'caste' groups. The characteristic features seemed to be similar. Was there evidence of intercourse with the Hindu Great Tradition? Do the people go to visit the pilgrimage centres associated with that tradition? He also remarked on the gap between the landowners and the labourers in this area, a subcontinent-wide feature of social stratification.

Taking off from Sinha's comments SRINIVAS said that he agreed with the position. Kapoor took up question earlier in the morning in the form of the question: 'Why are Brahmins necessary for the caste system?' The interesting element in the Kinnauri situation was that the infiltration of the Great Tradition into Kinnaur was facilitated by the society being stratified already. He argued that when fission begins in a tribe, the subsequent units begin to act caste-like and through economic differentiation develop into a caste system: curiously, thus, a process of fission facilitates fusion with the wider society. SINHA remarked that Srinivas's model pointed to the unfortunate situation where the more stratified a group, the easier would be its integration with the Indian society. With this analysis Kapoor agreed.

Although MATHUR noted, Furer Haimendorf had presented for Southern Nepal a situation similar to Kapoor's Kinnauri portrait, he asserted that the presence of Brahmins was necessary for a proper caste system. N K ROSE asserted the contrary position.

Concerning the influence of the Great Tradition in Kinnaur, ROSE said that the influence existed but on low castes, not high castes; the latter were likely to go to Haridwar for funerary services if they could afford the cost. In



illustration of this influence can be said: (1) The Kinnauri Buddhists are also stratified and their 'lower castes' are not allowed inside their temples—as Bose had earlier mentioned. Haldipur, at this stage, mentioned that there has been considerable influence of Hinduism, particularly Tantrism and the Hindu pantheon—Gods such as Ganesha and Tara—on Mahayana Buddhism of the North, especially the one prevalent in the border areas of India and in Tibet. The ancient Indian Buddhist scholars like Shantarakshita and Atisha Deepankar<sup>1</sup> went and settled in Tibet and influenced the religious practices. (2) In Kothi (a village in Kinnaur) close to the district headquarters there is a deity called Chandika which also features in the Hindu Great Tradition. With this deity, many other deities elsewhere in Kinnaur below Pangy have ties of kinship. Can these ties be interpreted to mean penetration by the Great Tradition? Then again, beyond Pangy there are similar deities which bear no relationship to the deity at Kothi—how should these be treated in relation to the Great Tradition? (these, ROY BUDEN<sup>2</sup> agreed, did not show any influence from the Great Tradition).

Sen in his brief reply made it clear that the culture complex of Kinnaur is different from the other plains and hills of India. The Khosias who have been referred as 'high caste' people enjoy the highest status in the existing social hierarchy. Since there is not a single Brahmin in the district, all the temple functionaries including the priests (*pujars*) belong to the Khosia group. The Chamang groups which include Damang (blacksmiths and silversmiths), Badhu or Oras (carpenters), and the Chamang (shoe makers and weavers), who have been grouped under the 'low caste' group are all untouchables. In the dichrotic social division one is either a Khosia or a Chamang. The Chamang group played a relatively minor role in the village community and very few of them were land owners. Even when they did own lands, on an average the area under their ownership was very small. All the three untouchable artisan groups were never allowed to enter the main temple where the deities are kept.

Regarding the contact of the Kinnaurais with the outsiders it should be mentioned that only a few shepherds used to migrate to the neighbouring districts with their flocks. The shepherds did not have much contact with the people of the neighbouring districts for the simple reason that they used to stay in the forests and high altitude fields (pastures). The Kinnaurais had trade relations with Tibet but the number of traders was very few. There are villages where there were no traders. Few individuals from the villages on the Rosh sub-division, and the Bospa Valley on the Sarala tehsil of Knapa sub-division were actually involved in direct trade with Tibet. Hence the main bulk of the population remained isolated because these contacts were brief and through individuals. The school going children usually were not inclined to take to the profession of flock rearing. Moreover, in Kinnaur each village has a primary or middle school and there are five high schools in the district. It is expected that the children would gradually become literate, if not educated.

### THIRD BUSINESS SESSION

## TRIBAL SITUATION IN BIHAR, ORISSA AND CENTRAL INDIA

WEDNESDAY, MORNING, JULY 9, 1969

- Chairman-moderator: Dr. B.K. Roy Burman
- Rapporteur: Dr. Satish Saberwal
- Speakers: (1) Dr. Sachchidanand: 'The Tribal Situation in Bihar'.  
(2) Dr. Jyoti Sen: 'The Jharkhand movement'.  
(3) Dr. D.P. Sinha: 'Tribalism, Pluralism and Nationalism: Levels of cultural identity in Banari'.
- Participants: K.S. Singh, S.P. Sinha, Philip Ekka, L.P. Vidyarthi, N.K. Bose, B.Sen, N. Das, Surajit Sinha, Niharranjan Ray, T.N. Pandey, A.K. Saran, Barun De, B.L. Abbi.

In opening the session the Chairman remarked that Eastern and Central India had been areas of interaction between tribals and outsiders coming in for many millennia. 2,500 years ago, into a tribal family in this area was born the man who became the Buddha. Here too were planted the Asokan edicts on tribal policy which continue to influence our relevant policies even today(?). As we seek to understand the contemporary tribal situation, the social consequences of the transformation being wrought by the operation of mines and heavy industry need to be reckoned.

His paper, SACHCHIDANANDA said, presented a macro-view; those by Dr. Sen and Dr. Sinha offered micro-views of the same context. He read an extended summary of his data on demography, leadership pattern among tribals, and their relations with non-tribals generally and with the government particularly.

The sources of tribal unrest in Bihar had varying time-depths. Economically, they fear land alienation, particularly in the Santal Parganas, where it has continued despite government attempts at protection. More recently the arrival of heavy industry had necessitated the uprooting of several villages; these villagers, having failed to use the compensation properly, were now in the streets. Also, while the employment opportunities for the education were plentiful in the early 50's, they have not kept up with the rising educational opportunities, and there are many educated unemployed. This creates a situation of rising frustrations among them. (Apropos of this, BOSE suggested

that levels of unemployment between the tribals and the others should be compared).

SACHACHIDANANDA traced the intricate pattern of political development over the years, noting the transition from the 'politics of compliance and affirmation' to the 'politics of pressure and protest'. Current influences include those of the extreme left, which has distributed 'Sayings of Birsa', a translation of the 'Sayings of Mao' the *Hul* (Revolutionary) Jharkhand party; the Jana Sangh which seeks to attract non-Christian tribals to its fold; and the growing influence of non-Christian leaders both in Congress and in Jana Sangh.

For responding to this situation SACHACHIDANANDA proposed a series of courses: Economic, requiring concentration of welfare funds on the poorer tribes on the poorer sections of the better-endowed tribes; and more employment for local men in industries being built there. Administrative, through a unified agency for tribal welfare and through strengthening the Regional Board for Planning and Development which should have both tribals and non-tribals on it. Socio-psychological, through greater participation in tribal activities by outsiders. Political, through the proposed Autonomous Regional Board.

JYOTI SEN in presenting her paper, traced the history of the emergence of the Jharkhand Party as a case study in tensions in Chotanagpur. She noted also that the term '*diku*' (outsiders) had at different times denoted different groups, defined along ethnic and /or class lines.

In a lengthy comment supplementing the papers' contents, SINGH said that the society in 'exposed tribal areas', such as Chotanagpur, was 'composite' in nature. The term land transfer represented the situation regarding land transactions better than land alienation. A quantitative assessment of the problem was rendered difficult by the fact that no new land settlement had taken place in the region since 1935. His observations indicated, however, that (1) the scheduled castes, who are more backward, were losing more land than the scheduled tribes, (2) the tribesmen's lands were sold more often to money-lenders, and (3) the transfers to and from scheduled tribes were approximately equal. Politically, the Jharkhand movement was a counterblast, led by leaders aligned with the British government and missionaries, and aimed at the Congress-led movements of *Kisans* during the pre-Independence years, which sought to improve their economic lot. Although the Jharkhand party was disintegrating there was a strong possibility of a Jharkhand *regional* (as against tribal) movement emerging, especially if a separate statehood is conceded for Telangana. His fear was that "communal" groups, the Hindus, the Muslims, the Christians and others would join hands in later years; the secularists had to face this threat. He commended to the seminar the Madhya Pradesh experience with nationalization of the handing of forest produce. The tribal workers' incomes and working conditions had improved greatly

compared with those when work was done on contract.

S P SINHA asserted that the land transfers to non-tribals occurred at highly inflated prices, and the sellers were not always innocent in these cases.

EKKA regretted that the discussion hitherto had underplayed the social integration between the different constituents of the populations in the villages and over-stressed the cleavages: these are stirred up largely by the city-based politicians. The Christian Missionaries had sought to help the underprivileged groups in the area, but they had always stressed the non-violent and constitutional courses. Citing a wealth of examples Father Ekka argued that particular events had long histories behind them, and particular incidents could be understood correctly only when put in historical perspectives.

VIDARTHI asked the seminar to remember the necessary distinction between the Jharkhand Party and the Jharkhand movement: there was the likelihood of a transition from the demand for a separate Jharkhand state for all its residents. The tribal areas were marked by a multiplicity of cleavages along tribe, religious and other lines. Besides, the view points of villagers were widely variant with those of their MLAs in Patna. Furthermore, the professional political leaders were frequently controlled by industrialists, missionaries, distillers, contractors and others.

BOSE noted that outsiders had lived intimately among tribal group in Central India for centuries. This encounter between different cultures turned into a massive confrontation in the wake of the new communication channels and the new heavy industries which brought large numbers of outsiders into the tribal areas, outsiders who tended to live as self-enclosed groups out of contact with their tribal neighbours. The opening up of the national resources in these areas for national use entailed the emergence of a new economy. Lacking in the requisite skills, the Scheduled Tribes of Chotanagpur found it difficult to adapt themselves to it and tended to become all the more dependent on land.

It was in this very complex situation that the Christians among the tribals, who used to live apart, were trying to re-establish themselves as equals among their unconverted brethren and this had led to political tensions of a new kind.

In connexion with unemployment among the tribals, BOSE argued that its true measure could be taken only in comparison with unemployment elsewhere. In this connexion he cited a survey in Calcutta which showed that although the Bengalis constituted only about 50% of the city's population, they formed about 70% of the unemployed in the city. The Bengalis had responded to this by taking to novel occupations: thus, over 40% of the workers at Bata Shoe Factory were now Bengalis of Brahmin, Kayastha, and other high castes.

DAS, in support of Bose, argued that drastic economic changes stimulated



social eruptions: perception of deprivation led people into new solidarities and animosities against groups defined as out-groups.

Several discussants dealt with the concept of *diku*, the outsider. SURAJIT SINHA said that some enquiries conducted by him and his associates at the Anthropological Survey of India suggested that the precise reference of the notion *diku* were fluid but applied to those who were outside the field of one's social and cultural control and who consequently were perceived to threaten one. NIHARRANJAN RAY, in this connection, called our attention to "one of the primary postulates of human thinking and imagination, about the individual himself and the world outside of himself, in a word, the otherness of himself. '*Diku*' of '*Kocha*' is just this 'otherness', and this consideration of 'otherness' is not any peculiarity of the tribes alone. 'Civilized' people too have used terms such as '*vavana*', '*mlechcha*', '*utlander*' etc. One need not therefore feel disturbed if some of our tribal peoples use the term '*diku*' or '*kocha*' to refer to the peoples who do not belong to them".

PANDEY drawing upon his fieldwork among the Zuni Indians of southwestern United States, said that they had three terms for outsiders, expressing different degrees of hostility. One term referred to the Whites and meant, literally, "blood-sucking leeches"; the second meant "enemy people" and referred to the pre-Columbian invaders, that is, other Amerindians who had raided them formerly; and the third meant simply "people" and applied to such people as himself, often referred to as a "friendly man from India".

In reply to a query from PANDIT, SACHCHIDANANDA said that the Jharkhand movement, a solidarity movement, had been largely restricted to the political realm—and even there it was now ridden with cleavages; it was not active in other socio-cultural areas.

In presenting the paper D.P. SINHA offered at some length the context and content of intergroup relations in the Banari area, about 90 miles from Ranchi. With in-group boundaries continually shifting and new identities fashioned, Sinha asserted that the search for power was the critical element in understanding the situation; and centering on this variable he offered his unorthodox definitions of the terms tribalism, pluralism, and nationalism.

SINHA'S presentation raised strong criticism *vis-a-vis* his conceptual categories, "tribalism", "pluralism", and "nationalism". Saran commented that Sinha's conceptual apparatus was confusing, especially his use of the variable power; his argument that power was equally shared in "nationalism" was untenable because power by its very nature cannot be equally shared. DE stated that Sinha's data did not fit his conceptual framework. He called for more substantive data, and wanted to know if all tribals in Banari practised the same kind of "tribalism". SURAJIT SINHA commented that the cases and anecdotes described by the speaker were interesting but the concept "tribalism" was of limited significance. ABBU said that the notion of "tribalism" in other areas, for example, Africa and New Guinea, often implied a *widening* of

identities; if so, why did Dr. Sinha stress exclusive-ness?

In his reply Sinha stated that if his data, as implied by Professor Saran and De, did not fit the conceptual apparatus presented by him he would like to have another look at them. He appreciated this feed-back. He pointed out the importance of "power" in political arenas for understanding inter-group relations, and added that he disagreed with Prof. Saran that power always implied unequal sharing. Responding to Abbi's comment Sinha stated that the "tribalism" of the Hindus in Banari, like the African or New Guinean examples given by him, was primarily geared to the widening of their identities.

AFTERNOON, JULY 9, 1969

Chairman-moderator : Dr. B.K. Roy Burman

Rapporteur : Dr. B.N. Saraswati

Speakers: (1) Nityananda Das : 'The Tribal Situation in Orissa'  
(2) Sudhibhushan Bhattacharya : 'Central Indian Tribes: a Historical Dimension'

Participants: Nirmal Kumar Bose, P.R. Sirsalkar, L.K. Mahapatra, S.P. Sinha, K.S. Singh, D.N. Mahumdar, B.K. Roy Burman, Stephen Fuchs.

DAS spoke on the tribal situation in Orissa. After introducing the tribes in their social, economic and cultural settings, he pointed to their economic backwardness as also to the growing unrest since the beginning of the 19th century. He however expressed his satisfaction over the steady rise in the level of education among some of the tribes, and commended the working of the residential schools known as Ashram Schools.

The discussion was limited to Das's observation on the working of the Ashram schools and the question of economic backwardness. BOSE supplemented the statement regarding the economic situation of the tribes in Orissa. He said that the "weakest link" in Orissa could be identified not only by low literacy or economic position but also by something which was a direct consequence of it. For instance, among the *Adivasis* surrounding Mathili Chest Hospital in Koraput, it has been ascertained by X-ray investigation that 1.8% among the East Bengal refugees are affected by T.B., while among the neighbouring *Adivasis* it is 2.4%. Among children in a neighbouring Ashram school it was found that 98% of the children suffer from anaemia and hookworm. This is indeed a very serious picture. There are hospitals and dispensaries in tribal areas, but they are often poorly manned or inadequately equipped. This should be attended to immediately.

Regarding economic exploitation, BOSE admitted, "the Goti system (debt bondage) is still current among some tribes in Koraput. Land laws have been passed to free the *Adivasis* from debt and loss of land, but in actual implementation they are often ineffective. We have been advising constitutional remedies including reforms in the administrative machinery for this purpose. But Gandhiji taught us that when constitutional remedies become ineffective we should not only continue to explore these remedies but also explore methods of *Satyagraha*. Social scientists often have a feeling of *Satyagraha* which they also entertain for homeopathy, it is looked upon as an unscientific or magical (charismatic) remedy. My suggestion is that it is not so. Gandhiji recommended shortly before he died that political workers should spread all over the country,

teach the masses what their constitutional rights were, and how they can exercise those rights through wisely devised methods of constructive work and civil disobedience, where necessary. We have today to pay particular attention to this."

MAHAPATRA, who had studied the Ashram schools in Orissa in collaboration with the NCERT, did not share Das's view on the future of these schools. He said, "the Ashram school provides free boarding and lodging and teaches craft and hence only when the students fail to get opportunity elsewhere they fall back upon it". MAJUMDAR pointed out that children of poor households have to help their parents in all domestic work. If the children are to be sent to Ashram school, the economy of the households concerned will be affected. Sirsalkar, on the contrary, commended the successful working of the Ashram schools in Maharashtra. He said, 'the scheme is very good, but expensive. So far only 37 Ashram Schools could be opened in Maharashtra with the assistance of the Government of India. Primary schools are not functioning satisfactorily. But can we open Ashram Schools with the finance of the State Governments? The only difficulty is that the teachers of the Ashram Schools are not qualified.'" On Sirsalkar's comment that Ashram Schools are expensive and that we do not have money enough to spread them over the countryside, Bose suggested; "we should try to establish, not many but a few schools along the proper Gandhian method. In order to universalize education, children in schools should be able to contribute part of their schooling expenses by means of productive work. Education should be woven round these crafts. Now that in India we have not money enough to build up all the schools necessary by means of government funds alone, let us make an honest effort to be self-reliant in the Gandhian way. There is undoubtedly a dearth of dedicated teachers. It is often said that the Christian missions succeed because they have dedicated men. But there is reason for me to believe that such a spirit is not lacking among our countrymen. In several parts of India violent revolts are spreading and young men are involved in organizing them. I have hardly any faith in violent methods for reasons which need not be elaborated here. But one cannot deny that there is a growing and widespread demand for social justice all over the country. There are also some men who are prepared to lay down their lives for securing justice. I believe that when there is so much of dedication already in the country, it is not impossible to harness that idealism and energy in the cause of non-violent methods of constitutional agitation and of *Satyagraha* coupled with constructive work. If proper examples can be set, it would not be impossible to wean men from the path of violence and frustration and lay the foundation of a new equalitarian society through Gandhian means."

MAHAPATRA gave an account of how tribals and non-tribals of Orissa live in harmony and interdependence. He said, "the Shiva temples in Orissa are worshipped by non-Brahmans and the Juangs of the plains worship



Juggernaut. Tribals are not consider untouchables anywhere in Orissa. The Kondhs are rather regarded as high group. Thus the tribals and the non-tribals have remarkably co-existed here in harmony. The emerging tribalism is undoubtedly a modern phenomenon. The Jharkhand movement has no momentum in all the districts of Orissa, it is only in the fringe areas in the south and the districts bordering Bihar. Orissa tribes as such have no political organization." In this context of cultural continuum between the tribal and the non-tribals, SINHA cited an interesting case of Murga Mahadeo (the Shiva lingam to which cock is offered) being worshipped by the tribal and the non-tribals of Chotanagpur.

SINGH said that while it was not correct to establish the tribal origin of all the Kshatriya kingdoms in Orissa, it is important to note the involvement of the tribes in coronation ceremonies in some of the states. This is again a feature not peculiar to Orissa. Many states of southern Rajasthan present an interesting parallel. The nature and intensity of tribals' symbolic participation in those ceremonies vary from place to place. These point to (i) the role of the tribals in founding of some of the states—the practice of some Rajas marrying tribals girls at the coronation ceremonies is of ritual significance only—and (ii) the importance of tribals in the preservation and prosperity of the kingdom situated in the areas populated by them. Among the Hindu communities, the Rajputs managed to strike a social equation with tribals, while economically exploiting them.

In his concluding remark Roy Burman suggested from the chair that the tribal situation in Orissa had to be viewed in the context of its regional variation. Commenting on DAS'S statement that before 1952 the forest was for the use of the tribals but later on, according to rule, it was reserved for commercial use, he gave a detailed account of the forest policy of the government. Regarding legislative measures, he also noted that in several cases regulations were passed, but the rules were not framed.

In his paper on central Indian tribes, Bhattacharya attempted to make a short historical survey of the tribes from early periods and showed the distribution of some of the important tribes of central India, classifying them on the basis of their mother tongues. Fuchs pointed out the problem of land scarcity in Bhil areas where he had done extensive work. He also brought out the factors of social discrimination which he met with in these areas. Roy Burman suggested a study of the political history of the Gonds. He said that one could study the effect of the emergence of Gond state on the different tribes of Central India.

#### FOURTH BUSINESS SESSION

### TRIBAL SITUATION IN WESTERN INDIA, ANDHRA PRADESH AND THE ANDAMAN-NICOBAR ISLANDS

THURSDAY MORNING, JULY 10, 1969

Chairman-Moderator: Professor Sachchidananda

Rapporteur: Dr. Satish Saberwal

Speakers: 1. L.M. Srikant: 'Western and Eastern Deccan Tribes'  
2. P.R. Sirsalkar: 'The Tribal Situation in Maharashtra'

Participants: S.C. Dube, K.S. Mathur, S. Mookerjee, L.P. Vidyarthi, Miss Pugh, Niharranjan Ray, B. Pakem, Surjit Sinha, R.N. Haldipur, N. Das, N.K. Bose, Philip Ekka, B.K. Roy Burman, D.R. Mankekar, P.C. Kar, A.Ao, D.P. Sinha, Dhir, Stephen Fuchs, D. Kapoor, Vyas.

L.M. SRIKANT initiated the discussion with his paper on 'Western and Eastern Deccan Tribes'. Embedded in his general reminiscences, drawn from over four decades of work among tribal peoples, were a number of important issues.

Specifically, he urged the Seminar to recommend the establishment of a high powered commission, which would include anthropologists, social workers, and MPs, in order to re-define the "tribal" in the contemporary context and to re-fashion the schedules of tribes as would be due shortly. Only if the groups which have done well in recent years are excluded from the there schedules can the necessary help reach those who are still the most backward.

He speculated about the desirability of using terms such as Girijan (Hill People) or Vanyajan (Forest People) in preference to "Tribe" or Vanyajati.

Integration, he felt, had to be emotional and not in name only; and therefore there was no harm in Nagaland getting its own Governor and High Court, especially when the state had more autonomy than any other in Union.

The establishment of heavy industries as at Rourkela, Bhilai, and Hatia uprooted the inexperienced tribals, and the compensation they received dissolved quickly, producing unrest as a natural consequence. For their adequate rehabilitation the plans failed to make adequate provisions.

On the social and economic fronts Srikantji stressed the role of voluntary agencies and the importance of debt relief through special cooperatives. he lauded in this connection the benefits flowing from the many successful cooperatives of the forest produce workers.

Initiating a lively discussion on Srikantji's paper and address, DUBE spoke of the highest regard that anthropologists and sociologists had for the social

workers who, like Srikantji, had worked for many years with singular dedication. Exchange of ideas among them was essential. However, he felt that the approach to the tribals should not be nostalgic and romantic. As they progress, they will inevitably share some of the evils of modern civilization along with its advantages. Attempts could be made to minimize the former.

The "nostalgic romanticism" drew a censure from Mathur and Mookerjee also. MATHUR argued that: (1) the perpetuation "of the simple, honest, scantily dressed tribal" invited to give "public performances of dance etc." was highly incompatible with the object of helping with the object of helping them attain the general Indian techno-economic level; and (2) insofar as the tapping of "metals and minerals", located in tribal areas, was an inescapable task, the displacement of some tribals was unavoidable: there was no alternative. MOOKERJEE argued that (1) for the state to enforce prohibition as a moral measure was wrong, (2) the tribals needed not a sweet name (such as Girijan) but, like the Harijans, modern occupations. To meet the aspirations of the new generation of tribals it is necessary to bring tribal young men into the modern ways of life. "Modernism does not consist in putting on drain-pipe like trousers. That is an abuse of civilization. Literacy and skill will bring the tribal into the threshold of technological revolution which is coming of age in India."

VIDYARTHI contended that it was not a definition of "tribe" that was lacking but a goal for the activity of tribal welfare; the goals of (1) integration with the wider society required; (2) matching programmes and, for their implementation, (3) an administrative machinery; weaknesses in all three directions needed a remedy.

Issue was joined with the "goal of integration" by MISS PUGH. She had heard about the intention to bring tribal peoples into the "mainstream of Indian civilization". What was this mainstream? What is Hinduism? In 1968 there was the International Conference of Tamil Culture; was that in it? Is the long experience with Islam part of it? What about the bits and pieces from the contemporary West? Again, what is integration? Among the 11 million people in Assam, 2 million are tribals. Are they to be integrated adequately today? Don't the tribals have the same rights to cultural autonomy? On this issue people in the Mizo Hills are very agitated today.

NIHARRANJAN RAY intervened to respond to Miss Pugh's eloquent queries. He said that the seminar was premised on the need to bring the tribal peoples into the mainstream not of Indian "civilization" but of the very composite life and society which were contemporary India. She had asked about Hinduism, Islam, Dravidian culture, Zoroastrians, Christians; to all of these the answer was "yes and no". The essential elements of the life and society, into which integration was necessary, were: (i) Parliamentary democracy, sovereign within its territorial limits, participation in these institutions and acceptance of the implied commitments was essential, (ii)

Secularism as a basic regulative principle had to be accepted, (iii) The modern production system, with a salient commitment to industrialize. "Modern life has its inexorable laws; those who cannot accept them will be crushed by the wheel of time". Ray did not mean 'integration' to imply disturbance of the particularities of constituent groups except to the extent necessary for meeting the demands of modern life. The diversities in Tamil Nadu, Punjab, and elsewhere were not being steam-rolled, but the industrial and similar thrusts inevitably rent the social fabric in some measure.

PAKEM, responding to Ray's intervention, reiterated his view that integration "should mean 'addition of parts' and not a 'combination of parts'." "Integration is often translated into phrases like "sharing of common values", Pakem said, but such jargon failed to enlighten people like him. "What I understand by this phrase is 'to reach the hearts and minds' of the tribals and vice versa. But can any non-tribal reach the hearts and minds of the tribals? And may I know whether the same non-tribal can reach the hearts and minds of the non-tribal elsewhere in the plains. If the answer be in the negative, I am afraid we cannot expect a tribal to reach the hearts and minds of the non-tribals. So how can we achieve this sort of emotional integration?"

"We, tribals, may believe in democracy, secularism, and socialistic systems of production as any other Indian, but emotional integration? Who will break the ice?", he asked.

Continuing the dialogue, SURAJIT SINHA said that Ray's response to Miss Pugh was not entirely conclusive: the fact is that in the Indian "mainstream" there was a core, a dominant element consisting of the Hindus and of their civilization, and the questions of the relations between the majority and the minorities had to be faced and answers sought. In this regard he thanked Miss Pugh for raising some questions of critical importance.

HALDIPUR recognised the urgent need of bridging the gulf between the tribals and the non-tribals and bringing about integration. "While every one nostalgically refers to the good qualities of honesty and truthfulness and the beautiful bows and arrows and the dances of the tribal people, we cannot keep them as 'Girijans' in order to preserve these qualities.

"In the twilight zone of culture, we have developed an ambivalence. We are drawn towards traditionalism but, at the same time, wish to induct modern forces. sometime we also display a feeling of patronage. He would have the high cases and the non-tribals hold up the mirror in order to perceive their own attitudes towards the tribals. While scheduling has resulted into the creation of some vested interests and that there is room for progressive de-scheduling keeping economic disability as one of the criteria, this phenomenon of vested interests is also visible amongst the other groups. We cannot have one set of values for one group and another for the other group. It is important to realise that our country is multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-lingual. It is only by sharing in the common venture of parliamentary democracy, planning



for an egalitarian society and developing a secular and tolerant attitude towards other groups that one can build up a sense of unity.

"We should take cognizance of our contemporary Indian life. We cannot stop the process of social change and modernisation. This, however, need not take place at the cost of our values which will survive in any case as they have done through history. The tribal music, dance, the bows and arrows and even their sparse attire could be preserved for functional purposes like cultural shows through which they could be proud of the diversity of culture. But earlier they participate in the economic and political life of the country, better it would be for them to understand and be woven into the common fabric. Let the educated tribals be absorbed in the general economy of the country and have jobs outside their own areas. It is only when opportunities are open to them in the whole country, the integration would have a value and a meaning."

DAS commented on the overall relationship between anthropologists and social workers. There was no lack of anthropological definitions of the concept 'tribe', but there was little dialogue between the two groups: after independence the social workers attacked anthropologists accusing them of wanting to maintain the tribals as museum pieces. Also, the social workers begin work among the tribals by attacking important elements in their social life, such as drinking and sacrifices, in the process losing the tribals' confidence.

The economic institutions and processes in the tribal areas drew comments from several discussants. Commenting on debt relief and cooperatives, BOSE made the following points: (1) Insofar as the governmental resources are inadequate for replacing the moneylenders in tribal areas (and elsewhere?), the money-lenders should be *licensed* and *controlled* (regarding the interest rates charged) in order to check their present destructive operations. Ways should at the same time be found to reduce the risks in their loan operations. Gradually, they may be replaced by credit co-ops, but these had present several weaknesses requiring remedy. (2) Even "successful" co-ops, often, are viable only if their 'overhead' or 'operational' costs are paid by other organizations. This was an unsatisfactory model and these costs had to be borne by themselves increasingly. (3) Co-ops can function only in homogeneous communities (as pointed out by Father Ekka below), and we have to create a new kind of homogeneity on a secular basis. (4) Training the co-op members should be a continuous process. In processing loan applications, the co-op should try to bring in *all* members of discuss and, particularly for non-productive loans, the applicant should be induced to minimize expenses. To co-ops will thus become an instrument of education also. (5) In some areas the co-op's impact on the region's economic life is a very small fraction of the regions's total economic transactions. By introducing a professional commercial elements into the co-ops, they can be helped to take over progressively increasing functions in the economic life of the region.

EKKA said that it was necessary that dedicated Srikants and Thakkar

Bapas should be reborn among younger men today. He described the case of the Ranchi "Catholic Co-operative Credit Society" where the whole community was responsible for returning the loans. The need for homogeneity, however, permitted its coverage to Catholics only, and he asked: how are we to overcome this limitation? Also, the Ranchi District Catholic "Grihni Schools" for marriageable tribal girls, which teach the 3 R's, health, child care and other household skills might be tried in other areas.

ROY BURMAN said that Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra and Madhya Pradesh had developed the Forest Labour Co-ops, but in many cases the traditional contractors (exploiters) had infiltrated the new structures and used the new co-ops to sustain the old power relations and to advance their own interests. Vyas cited a similar experience from Rajasthan. D P SINHA said that the Banari Forest Labourers' Co-op was doing well in 1966; research aiming to determine why some co-ops do well and others fail was necessary. Sirsalkar said that failure was often due to poor forest coups being allotted to the co-op for exploitation.

MANKEKAR said that (i) the failures of government policies while these searched for the right courses were excusable, but the failures to learn from these mistakes were not. Many social workers wore blinkers and stuck to their shibboleths like prohibition even when (a) illicit distilleries have become India's greatest cottage industry and (b) liquor is an essential element in the tribals' social processes; (ii) he was curious whether experts were being inducted to replace amateurs in tribal welfare work in order to make it more professional.

KAR suggested that the 'guilt' or the 'gap' between the tribals and the others was due not to socio-cultural differences but economic disparities. Whereas the tribals' isolation/exclusion during British days resulted from colonial administrative actions (enactments, regulations)—features which have since been in the process of being reversed—similar results ensue from "economic disparity, sharply uneven distribution of material benefits", contributing to unrest in the hills. Economic development will reduce the social tensions and bring the tribals "to the level of their counterparts in the plains." Secondly, the political leaders played an important role in "stabilizing or widening the gap". The experts' suggestions are often ignored or vitiated by the political leaders in view of political considerations: how, then, can the expert views be made to prevail and to benefit the "tribals"?

In Nagaland, AO said, there was no problem of economic exploitation by outsiders as there was in Central India, there was only a political problem of how much power was to reside at which levels.

While replying to the debate Srikantji said: "his request for an appropriate definition of tribe arose not from a desire to perpetuate tribal separateness but from one to ensure that the benefits went to those who needed them most. He might, himself, be short on modernisms but, following Gandhiji, he refused

to be blown off his feet by novel ideas though he was open to persuasion. His complaint was not against the new industries but against the inadequate provision their budgets made for rehabilitating and, more important, retraining the tribal people into the skills required in these new industries. The idea of licensed moneylenders was attractive but did not seem overly promising in view of the large scale on which laws in the country are routinely violated. Dr. Roy Burman's forest co-ops were exceptional cases and did not represent the full picture. Many other co-ops in tribal areas, in Gujarat and Maharashtra, had been very effective."

In surveying the Maharashtrian experience, SIRSALKAR summarized the problems concerning education, economic development, administration, and research. The paper concluded with a number of suggestions for improving the situation. DHIR said that Ashram Schools tended to be too expensive. In his view the core demands of the students were met if (i) the schools offered the 3 R's, and (ii) free lodging and boarding arrangements were made. In this way the cost would be cut. N. Vyas reported that Rajasthan's three Ashram Schools faced closure this year. The idea of hostels for tribals only was not very welcome; instead there should be more scholarships and grants for books and accommodation in general hostels; thus would integration be fostered. Mookerjee found the signboards outside the "Backward Classes Hostels" to be repugnant. BOSE informed the house that 10-25% of the residents in all such hostels were high caste boys, and their names were misleading.

Dhir cited the regulations of the then Punjab Government in providing incentives to government servants for working in the arduous and inaccessible scheduled areas of Lahaul and Spiti. Government servants were made eligible to 100% special allowance, and to an increase by 150% in the daily allowance while on tour. They were given adequate appreciation by way of additional increments on the conclusion of their tenure. The result was that government servants volunteered for their posting in that area. Others pointed out that the problem in the Punjab was small-scale. In Maharashtra, SIRSALKAR said, even a 25% special pay would cost Rs. 25 lakhs extra a year, and this proposal had been under consideration for five years. KAR reported that, where the local language was the medium of instruction (as in Garo Schools), outside teachers could not function, and local people simply had to be trained to become teachers.

FUCHS asked whether tribal men themselves should be trained for leadership roles, as the Missionaries had done; this would avoid excessive imposition of outsiders. SIRSALKAR said that tribal men, when trained, were often reluctant to return to their home areas, alleging that any attempt to make them do so would be discriminatory. Drawing upon his Kinnauri experience, KAPOOR said that Punjab's incentives had not been able to motivate the administrative personnel to stay there in the late fifties and early sixties, but the recent roadbuilding and improved communications had helped the situation

greatly. To the credit of the new roads, therefore, should be added administrative as well as military effectiveness.

DHIR remarked that the Department of Social Welfare was treated 'contemptuously' (in the Punjab) except at the time of elections, when funds were poured into it since it catered to 20% of the state population, which made or marred one's political prospects. He had been urging the state government to provide a more steady support for the department.

VYAS called attention to the very wide variation between the Tribal Research Institutes in the different states along almost all relevant dimensions and demanded an assessment of the relative adequacy of the different patterns. SIRSALKAR agreed with this view and called for the strengthening of the Institutes.



THURSDAY AFTERNOON JULY 10, 1969

Chairman-moderator : Professor Sachchidananda

Rapporteur: B.N. Saraswati

Speakers : 1. Suryanarayana : 'The Saoras of Andhra Pradesh in a Democratic Set-Up'  
2. T.N. Pandit : 'Tribes of the Andaman and : Nicobar Island'.

Participants: Nityananda Das, L.K. Mahapatra, B.K. Roy Burman, R.N. Haldipur, P.C. Kar, M.N. Srinivas, Niharranjan Ray, Rakshat Puri.

In his paper SURYANARAYANA\* tried to show that among the Saoras new political institution had not been able to replace the traditional one. He also referred to the prevailing unrest in Andhra Pradesh and opined that the main cause of tribal frustration was deeply rooted in their economic exploitation, of which he cited several instances.

In the discussion that followed the paper, the main point was tribal unrest. MAHAPATRA was of the opinion that the unrest had a deep-rooted cause. He also reported that toward the end of 1940 there was revolt among the Saoras of Gunupur district on the issue of economic exploitation. ROY BURMAN felt that the present unrest had arisen on account of the cultural frustration. He recalled that in one of his visits to Gunupur he had seen that an attempt was being made to develop a script for the Saoras. He wanted to know whether such an attempt was still there in Srikakulam. Suryanarayana said that he was not aware of any such move. Kar, while talking on the general economic condition of the tribes, opined that much of the unrest among the so-called tribes had been due to economic disparities, besides other social and ethnic reasons.

ROY BURMAN referred to the cult of Mahimadharam in the Arakh hill which had its origin in Dhenkanal. Srinivas wanted to know the role of Komiti in tribal unrest, and HALDIPUR enquired about the methods which an anthropologist might use for the study of unrest. Speaking of the Saoras of Orissa, DAS informed that they are good peasants both at wet and shifting cultivation.

SURAYANARAYANA referring to Srinivas said that Komatis are local money-lenders there, hence they do have some role in the tribal unrest. Replying to HALDIPUR, SURYANARAYANA said that it is too difficult to form a methodology unless a preliminary study of the unrest is made. Referring to CAS, he said that the Saoras of Orissa and Andhra Pradesh differed considerably in many respects.

\*See A Summary of remaining papers—Editor

PANDIT gave a talk on the tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. After giving a brief historical and geographical account of the Islands, he described the material culture of the tribes and then discussed the problems of their integration. In the end, he also gave certain suggestions regarding the measures to be taken for their development. He illustrated his talk by showing slides on the Onge and the Jarwa tribes.

RAY revealed the antiquity of the Car Nicobar Island. He referred to a Sanskrit work "Manjusri Moolkalpa" of the 8th century wherein the Car Island has been named after the *Cumaianga* fruit and the Nicobar Island was known as Nakkavaram during the reign of Rajendra Chola. He further stated that the Island was also mentioned in the Chinese account of the 2nd century AD.

Touching upon Pandit's reference to the "peculiar geographical position" of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands which has persuaded the Government of India to give military importance to these islands in their development, PURI stated that the strategic location of these islands of course could not be minimized. Given the requisite strength and preparation and armament, it would, for example, in a conflict with China on the India-Tibet border, be possible to strike at China's industrial rear by air, and on the sea secure the Bay of Bengal. But the strategic location of the Islands also gives them commercial and economic significance. The time was opportune for actively considering the establishment of a free port in the Islands—most suitably perhaps on Greater Nicobar. The days of Hong Kong as a free-port are numbered—it is a British colony by China's consent, as long as China wants it for earning exchange and importing vital materials. Singapore is bound to find it increasingly difficult to reconcile its free-port status with protective tariffs for its manufactured goods as its industries grow. Moreover, it cannot take much more traffic. Aden as a free-port too is on the way out. A number of tycoons who were asked their views about a free port on Greater Nicobar responded enthusiastically, and some even expressed readiness to participate in a substantial way in building the required infra-structure for a free port. It was also suggested that the Government of India might issue special currency for such a free port, which would be convertible. Preventing smuggling etc. into the mainland of India would not be a big problem because existing customs arrangements should serve. A free port at Greater Nicobar would very likely increase tourist visitors manifold, and eventually also rescue from isolation and backwardness the Island's indigenous people.

FIFTH BUSINESS SESSION

PROBLEMS OF INTEGRATION

July 11, 1969

Chairman: Dr. S.C. Sinha

Rapporteur: Biswajit Sen

Speakers: (1) Professor Gauranga Chattopadhyaya: 'The Problem of Tribal Integration to Urban Society: A Theoretical Approach'  
(2) Stephen Fuchs: 'Land Scarcity and Land Hunger Among Some Aboriginal Tribes of Western Central India'

Participants: M.N. Srinivas, K.S. Singh, L.P. Vidyarthi, Nityanand Das, N.K. Bose, S.P. Sinha, Sachchidananda, J.P.S. Uberoi, B.L. Abbi, R.D. Sanwal, A.K. Suran, R.N. Haldipur, D.R. Mankekar, Philip ekka, A.P. Sinha.

CHATTOPADHYAYA, while presenting his paper, highlighted the following points:

(i) Various diverse groups, when they share common economy and get socially mixed, cannot retain their cultural distinctiveness.

(ii) 'Integration' is difficult to define; he expressed his difficulty to understand the term 'emotional integration' which has been suggested by Professor Nirmal Kumar Bose.

(iii) Certain communities in India have tended to stay on the fringes of the Indian Society in terms of participation in the economic, political and ritual structures. The tribes according to him were the fringe communities, and the dominant communities were the core communities.

(iv) Backward communities remained backward and few groups started as 'backward' since 1947 for economic benefits.

(v) 'Detribalisation' would be liked by the majority of the tribesmen.

(vi) Most of the problems faced by the tribes are also faced by the non-tribals. Without any scientific study we cannot say that the tribals are particularly sensitive to industrialisation.

SRINIVAS commented that a perfectly integrated society could not be conceived of because no such society was present either in the East or in the West. He referred to the agitation of Negroes and the student unrest in the U.S.A. and to the Welsh desire to have a separate Parliament in a relatively homogeneous country such as Great Britain. When even the old nations have problems of integration, India with only twenty years of independence cannot

integrate thousands of diverse communities into the mainstream of the country. Moreover, when self consciousness comes to a people as a result of various political, economic and cultural factors there is bound to be disturbance. One should not be disturbed by this restlessness, but should try to find the positive aspects of it. A person tries to identify his position in relation to another but in case of crisis and war unites into a group. He referred to the Indo-Pakistan war and Chinese aggression when all the people united as Indians. He commended Chattopadhyaya for rightly mentioning the problems of the tribals and poor peasants. Dr. Ghurye was the first to stress this in his study *The Aborigines So-called and Their Future* (1942). Srinivas held the view that these should be systematically explored. The problems of the tribes in the main land and those inhabiting the border-regions should be studied differently because possibly they have different problems. Chattopadhyaya has made distinction between core and fringe but he has ignored the fact that the fringe could displace the core. He referred to the Backward Classes Movement in South India, where non-Brahmins replaced the Brahmins who constituted the elite. The movement was a kind of cultural revolution. He pointed out that Chattopadhyaya had mentioned that the anthropologist and sociologists generally belong to the 'core'. He however felt that some anthropologists and sociologists from the core section might deliberately identify themselves with the fringe.

SURESH SINGH stressed the need for clarification of the concepts of isolation, assimilation and integration, because these have been played up by those who had a great deal to do with the formulation of policies and programmes concerning the tribal people. In historical perspective, the policy of isolation and status quo held the field from the end of the 19th century to the advent of independence. Early British administrators, foreign missionaries and anthropologists like Dr. J.H. Hutton belonged to this school. As the national perspective on tribal question emerged in the wake of the freedom movement, some social workers and national leaders became aware of the danger of the first view and propounded the theory of assimilation. Notable among these was A.I. Thakkar, popularly known as Thakkar Bapa. Since independence the concept of integration has prevailed. Two important elements in this concept are (i) recognition of the cultural identity of the tribal people and (ii) development of tribal communities in the wider context of overall economic growth, national security and territorial integrity. Verrier Elvin came round to this view and he gave effective and powerful expression to his views about this. In fact this has formed the basis of our tribal development programmes.

VIDYARTHI felt that Chattopadhyaya's concept of National integration in terms of core and fringe was inspiring, but since he had not clarified the concept it created confusion. The concept of core and fringe has been used to mean two classes high and low, according to Marxian interpretation. The two



concepts proposed by Chattopadhyaya should be supported both at micro and macro levels; and also in terms of geographical, historical and sociological analyses. He opined that at the historical level there had been interactions between caste and tribes, between Aryans and the Dravidians at the folk rural-urban continuum. This gets reflected in the concepts of 'universalisation and parochialisation'. He felt that this frame oversimplified the Indian situation which was very complex and should be thoroughly revised.

DAS held the view that mobility of core and fringe communities was a continuous process. He mentioned that the Saoras of Gajam Agency (Orissa) who migrated to tea gardens, returned to their villages to perform some sacrifice and ceremonies in the traditional pattern in order to identify themselves with the core of Saora culture. The influence of Christianity and other urban phenomena had the impact on the traditional culture. He referred to the formation of the 'Justice Party' which was formed to counteract the domination of Brahmins in public services and other economic pursuits and the situation which gave birth to 'Dravida Munetra Kazhagam' party. He also mentioned that since Swatantra Party joined with Congress, the Brahmins joined stalwarts of anti-Brahmin campaign. Hence he observed that there was a constant drift in either direction between core and fringe communities.

BOSE commented that Chattopadhyaya had used unfamiliar terms, but what he had described is the class structure which already exists in Indian society. Chattopadhyaya has also said by implication that it is wrong to differentiate between tribal communities and suppressed classes who do not live in the hills and jungles. Srinivas has also said in course of his remarks that Professor Ghury first showed the identity of the 'so-called tribes' with the rest of the Indian peasantry.

BOSE mentioned that a preacher of Brahmo Samaj in the eighties of the last century, became a labourer in the tea gardens of Assam where tribal people as well as Oriya peasants were working as labourers. After his return he wrote a book named *Slavery in Assam*. That was perhaps for the first time tribes and peasants were equated with one another. Sarat Chandra Roy in his book *Oraon Religion and Customs* has described the Tana Bhagat movement where he said that although the outer trappings of the movement were religious yet the mainspring of that movement was the desire of the peasants to free themselves from economic oppression. *The Mundas and their Country*, by S.C. Roy, gave us a long history of peasant unrest in Chotanagpur. Professor Bose made it clear that there were others, who tried to look at the tribal problem from a unified point of view, long before we tried to do the same.

S.P. SINHA held the view that Chattopadhyaya's interpretation of Jharkhand Movement, as an attempt of the tribals to enter the core from the fringe, was not correct since the leaders of Jharkhand movement were landowners, and rich people(?). Chattopadhyaya also observed that tribal leadership come from higher class, but that is not correct due to the fact that the non-Jharkhand

leaders are mostly from poor communities(?).

SACHCHIDANANDA held the view that the terms, core and fringe, were ecological terms and cannot be used to describe the complex social situation, existing in India. It is said that when fringe tries to enter the core, it is resisted and conflict is generated. But in Bihar the Jharkhand party is promoting the separateness of the tribals against the others, and they are not at all interested to enter into the core. Chattopadhyaya's thesis is untenable from the historical perspective. Many tribal groups have entered into the Hindu fold without any opposition and not all of them have been placed at the lowest level. Certain tribals have been accepted as Kshatriyas.

UBEROI commented that there is no pre-defined Indian mould into which the tribal communities are to be melted and recast. Roy Burman has rightly said that the "tribal complex" is now giving way to the "minority complex". We are all minorities in India, and are all in the fringe in one way or another. Even the "ruling class" is culturally on the fringe. Hinduism is said to be a confederation of communities and faiths. Each one community and each one faith within it is a minority community. Secularism in India means the equality of all faiths, and social democracy is the equality of all communities. The 'integration' or "assimilation" of tribal communities, Muslims or ex-Princes should be understood in this context.

ABBI said that the paper lacked conceptual integration. The paper employed three different modes of analysis—caste, class and ethnic—without specifying the relationship among them and between them and the empirical data. Instead the paper makes opportunistic shifts from one mode of analysis to another, to fit the data into the classification of fringe and core groups.

SANWAL commented that sometimes identification of core and fringe was difficult. In the North-Eastern Hill regions which community belongs to the core and which belongs to the fringe it is difficult to say.

SARAN held the view that Chattopadhyaya had not properly defined the two concepts, core and fringe. When core and fringe exist side by side, it means that one accepted the other and that was integration. Always there would be some communities who would form the core and others would remain in the fringe.

HALDIPUR observed that India having so varied a culture complex, it would be difficult to group different communities into core and fringe. Every culture has its hard and soft core. To integrate the soft core with the fringe would be easier but to integrate the hard core with fringe would be difficult.

MANKEKAR emphasised the point that in India they were all minorities. Even Hindus and Muslims are sub-divided into different groups. To reconcile religious and cultural minorities and to integrate the tribals with the non tribals we will have to deal the problems from the secular point of view.

EKKA remarked that Jharkhand Party was not interested to enter the core, it was a separatist movement. They were interested to achieve power. When

they were promised some reservation in development and planning programmes they merged with the Congress.

CHATTOPADHYAYA in his reply to the various questions raised by the participants said that there were differences at caste, ethnic and economic levels. They were discussing integration but they were not much clear about the meaning of integration. He held the view that core and fringe groups were definitely existing in India. Both at micro and macro levels there are differences between core and fringe. Due to economic disparities, even among the Muslims and the Christians there are upper classes. He did not accept the view expressed by a participant that in India all the groups are minorities.

STEPHEN FUCHS while presenting his paper mentioned how the tribals in Central and Western India were pushed to the jungle and unfertile hill-tracts by the Hindu castes who settled on those fertile lands where tribals had settled at a much earlier days. He also referred to several factors, like land alienation, population explosion, etc. which resulted in land scarcity. He referred to the following major disadvantages, which the tribals are facing:

- (i) Comparatively low production of the fields due to the reason that the tribals still follow primitive technique, the quality of seed is poor and they are ignorant of the use of chemical fertilizers; and
- (ii) high rate of criminality in the region.

FUCHS held the view that if politician did not take up the cause of the tribals of this region, then what was happening in West Bengal and Telengana could happen in this part of India in the near future.

SINGH commented that the tribals had enjoyed longer protection under Tenancy laws in the eastern than in the western region. This explains the widespread disintegration of tribal agrarian system in the western region. There is close relationship between land hunger and criminality.

MAJUMDAR commented that landlessness is not a problem peculiar to those communities which are usually designated as tribes; it is a problem for the Indian peasantry in general.

BOSE observed that criminality might have increased in western part of Central India due to land alienation. But in other regions under same situation people have not become criminals. The underlying causes of this difference should be investigated.

SINHA held the view that alienation and land-hunger might not be the only reason for the rise of criminal attitude. There may have been other factors.

SRINIVAS wanted to know whether intoxication and excessive liquor consumption were responsible for developing criminal attitude.

In his reply FUCHS said that though land legislation Act was passed in 1960, land is being taken by the non-tribals even at present. The area being hilly only 40 per cent of land is cultivable. The Bhils have been fighting the Rajputs since the 12th century AD, and they have developed a tradition of fighting. To support themselves sometimes they do robbery. He held the view

that though they were conquered by the Rajputs, they attach significance to the Rajputs and follow some of the practices and customs of the Rajputs. He mentioned that the Bhils in some ceremonial feasts drink too much and do evil. Hence it may be that intoxication results in crime. He agreed that though land hunger may not be the only reason for criminal activities, it cannot be ignored.



## AFTERNOON SESSION

### DISCUSSION ON INTEGRATION

**Participants :** M. Aram, Mrs. Krieleno Terhuja, Miss M.D. Pugh, Niharranjan Ray, K.S. Mathur, J. P.S. Uberoi, R.D. Sanwal, R.K.S. Chopra, L.K. Mahapatra, S.P. Sinha, A. P. Sinha, S. Mookerjee, M. N. Srinivas, N. K. Bose, R.D. Roy burman, Golam Osmani.

Most of the participants felt strongly that the concept of 'integration' should be discussed elaborately. Some of the representatives from the North-Eastern Hill areas expressed their doubt and thought that integration probably meant assimilation or Hinduisation.

ARAM said that the aspirations of the tribal people were rising. Even after Nagaland had got a separate political status, some Naga leaders were taking to violence to achieve more. An improved political framework is essential through which the Nagas can fulfil their aspirations. All tribal unrest should not be considered a threat to national unity. When there was a threat on the Indian border, the Nagas helped the Indian force to resist the foreign invasion.

MRS. KRIELEN0 TERHUJA said, it was often alleged that the Nagas have become anti-national and have not quite come into the mainstream of Indian life because they have become Christian and have been kept isolated. Is the Hindu way of life the mainstream? She did not believe that this should be so. But even the Nagas calling themselves Indians are treated differently in the plains of Assam. The Nagas did not come under the influence of any other religion of the world prior to their contact with Christianity around 1880 and in the present circumstances they are not likely to become Hindus. This should not, however, lead to a conclusion that they are off the mainstream.

MISS M.D. PUGH felt strongly that the participants should make it clear as to what they meant by the mainstream of Indian life? She mentioned the fact that the Khasis and Jaintias were living together as an unit, but when the Jaintias felt that they were dominated by the Khasis they asked for separation on the pretext that they had quite a separate culture.

NIHARRANJAN RAY made it clear that they were not thinking in terms of assimilation or isolation. "We are not for Hinduisation. We must realise that we are in a new historical situation. All sections of people within the territorial boundary of India must join hands in a common productive organisation, which is the mainstream. The participation in the mainstream did not mean the dominance of any particular culture or religious ideology, but rather equal participation by all groups in building up a secular parliamentary democracy. He also emphasised that industrialisation is necessary through planned economy. Industrial civilization would make an impact on the traditional society, and both tribals and non-tribals would have to face the challenge of

the time. He further stated that the concept of integration can be clarified in terms of three major factors:

- (1) Integration into a common whole, where all diverse cultures, population, geographical regions would be brought together;
- (2) integration into a common productive organisation; and
- (3) integration into secular and democratic set-up provided by the constitution.

MATHUR maintained that any tribe within the territorial boundary of India was Indian. There has never been any historical, ethnic, linguistic and cultural unity in India, rather there was diversity in cultures, religion, dialect etc. There was unity of mind through sacred symbols like cow, temples, rivers and certain ways of life. He held the view that 'Solidarity' would be a better term to use. He said two persons with different religious faiths could co-exist and tolerance should be expected from both the parties. He also stressed the point that by Indian "we mean (1) to call oneself as Indian; (2) being a part of the political system existing in India, one has to abide by it, whatever may be the system, and (3) emotional integration is essential and in any given situation all should feel as Indians."

UBEROI commented that the problem of integration or assimilation or identity was a problem not only for the tribal communities but also for Muslims, Sikhs, ex-princes, etc. It was also a problem for the majority "community". There are three states of the Union — Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab and Nagaland — where Hindus are in a minority. He contended that the concept of secularism in India did not stand opposed to the idea of religion. Indian secularism meant *ecumenicalism* as opposed to denominationalism in religion. He raised the question: who would decide what our new society would like? All communities, regions and political parties will influence its future shape through the non-violent democratic process. In this sense, politicalization of issues should be welcomed without reservation.

SANWAL emphasised the point that they should be clear about the meaning of terms "integration", "assimilation", "unity", "accommodation", "adjustment" etc. He held the view that accommodation and adjustment referred to the process of harmonization through compromise and integration could be achieved through mutual give and take. If unity is achieved through assimilation the danger of conflict will be there. Unity refers to harmony between persons, and integration refers to the process whereby clearly identifiable units or systems are rendered into a whole through simple addition or juxtaposition. Integration may be cultural, economic, symbolic and political or administrative. In the present day Indian context national integration should be taken to mean unity through interdependence in the economic sphere and through participation in and acceptance by all sections of the Indian nation of a basic minimum of political and economic values and

symbols, which would lead to "emotional integration".

CHOPRA suggested that the three parameters suggested by Ray in context with the problem of integration should be discussed elaborately. He observed that those parameters are deserved parameters but they have not been accepted universally in this country. If those were accepted then the problem of integration would not become so complex. There are certain units who believe that they should not remain within the territorial boundary of India and they would be a perfectly viable unit remaining outside the country. The example very often cited is so Nepal. Similarly because of traditional and cultural diversity there may be disagreement on the other two parameters. He felt that the business of the seminar should be to discuss in detail about the parameters and not their assumed acceptance. The tribals and others need to be convinced about the acceptability of the parameters.

MAHAPATRA in agreement with Ray said that the vital elements of mainstream are nationalism or building of the nation, the democratic constitution and the rule of law, the socialistic pattern of productive system through planning, industrial civilization. He expressed the view that to bring the diverse cultures into the mainstream of the Indian life is not a difficult job. He mentioned that in traditional India, Hindus were in a majority but their dominance was not of an aggressive or compulsive nature in day-to-day life, with regard to ethnic and cultural minorities. Even the Hindu castes system itself was an example of cultural pluralism. It would not be difficult for the Hindus to be part and parcel of the mainstream of modern India, where other ethnic minorities would maintain their own sub-cultures and values, provided they subscribe to the basic common values of the Nation.

A.P. SINHA suggested that regional studies should be made based on empirical data to determine the nature and magnitude of misunderstanding, and removal of such misunderstanding would be useful for achieving integration. The process of communication between the different cultural and linguistic groups should be improved. Self-group consciousness and the symbols of each group should be studied to see whether they differ or merge.

S.P. SINHA held the view that the real Indian was he who took pride in calling himself an Indian. If any person from any community or faith feels that he or she is proud of our past heritage and agrees to join hands with others in the interest of the Nation he or she shall be an Indian. Peoples of India united several times in one body when there was a threat from outside the country.

MOIKERJEE said that the word integration comes from the arithmetical term 'integer'.  $3+2$  make 5, but then the characteristics of either is lost in the sum total. Such a 'mathematical' integration is not possible in human society. It is also doubtful whether real 'emotional' integration exists anywhere except perhaps in a happily married couple.

Almost all of India's land frontiers are 'tribal'. In the country's north,

north-east and north-west there live numerous groups of tribal population and this makes the borders rather sensitive. For reasons of security alone, the border people should be dealt with great care and caution. An atmosphere should be created in which the people could develop some kind of solidarity with the rest of the Indian population. He regretted, therefore, that our attitude towards tribal unrest has been similar to the British attitude towards our own "freedom struggle". He mentioned that in a country like U.S.A., even the system of law is different in 50 constituent states, yet the country can hold together, both in war and peace. In India, integration has got to follow a federal pattern. He maintained that there was enough evidence in the history of this country that cultural integration was possible among the various communities of India, especially in the fields of arts and literature. The best exponents of classical 'Hindu' Raga-Ragini have been our 'Muslim' musicians and some of the best historians of Muslim rule of India have been 'Hindus'. He stressed the point that new values and symbols have got to be found which would be acceptable to all and would serve as the basis of the integration process. Four such pillars of integration should be, as Ray summed up: Faith in a parliamentary democracy, universal adult franchise, planned economic development and acceptance of a secular way of life. The genius of Indian nationhood should explore the variety of its components and its strength should be derived from the sum-total.

ROY BURMAN held that in democracy a majority rules over minorities. He mentioned that when the Language Bill was passed in Assam the steam-roller of majority was used over the minorities. He said that integration can be effected at different levels in a multi-dimensional way. A particular community who is a majority at the particular region may be a minority group in another region.

SRINIVAS maintained that integration is a continuing and dynamic process, and it can be achieved through a give and take policy.

Bose expressed the view that the participants from the hill areas have a doubt that in the process of integration their culture may be swamped by the Hindu way of life, but that is not true. He mentioned that Hinduism is not a static and rigid religion. Throughout its history, numerous reformers have tried to wash away the evils of Hinduism. He referred to Gandhiji's conception of secularism which meant that India belonged to everybody, where one can preserve his belief and culture. Gandhiji was against supporting religious education from state funds and was also against government support to any religious institution.

GOLAM OSMANI remarked that the Muslims were unable to identify themselves with sacred symbols like cows etc. The reason was obvious. The cow has got religious significance with the Hindus and not with the Muslims and the Christians. But to hold that the Muslims are a unit complete in themselves would be a grave mistake. The Muslims have no identity of interests



in the real sense of the term. The nature of the movement now dominant in East Pakistan would show that the Muslims of East Pakistan were making a bid to thwart the West Pakistani domination. They would readily identify themselves as 'Bengalees' first and Muslims afterwards. In India too we can expect such orientation in the outlook of the Muslims if they are drawn into the politico-cultural activities of the country.

SIXTH BUSINESS SESSION

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

SATURDAY JULY 12, 1969

MORNING SESSION

Chairman-Moderator : Prof. N.K. Bose

Rapporteurs: Dr. B.L. Abbi  
Dr. B. N. Saraswati

- Speakers: 1. Dr. Kumar: (i) 'Agrarian issues in Chotanagpur'.  
Suresh Singh (ii) 'Famine, Scarcity and Economic  
Development in Tribal Areas'.  
2. S.P. Sinha : 'Interdependence and Regional  
Development in Chotanagpur'.\*  
3. S.N. Dubey: 'Education, Social Change and Political  
Consciousness among the Tribes of North-  
East India'.  
4. R.P. Srivastava: 'Progress and Problem of Tribal  
Education in Pasighat'\*\*.  
5. R.N. Haldipur: 'Policy towards and Administration of the  
tribes of North-East India'.

Participants in discussion : P. Ekka, B.K. Roy Burman, P.R. Sirsalkar, D.P. Sinha, L.P. Vidyarthi, Biswajit Sen, M. Aram, R.N. Haldipur, D.N. Majumdar, N.K. Bose, D.R. Mankekar.

SINGH read two papers. In the first paper—Agrarian issues in Chota-nagpur — he mainly dealt with the problem of land alienation. He showed that alienation or transfer of land took place in four categories: (1) non tribal to non-tribal, (2) tribal to tribal, (3) tribal to non-tribal, and (4) non-tribal to tribal. Most transfers occurred in the first two categories and the remainder were roughly equally divided between the last two categories, which was contrary to the popular belief regarding one-way transfer of land—from tribals to non-tribals. He also discussed how tribal economy was being rapidly commercialized. In the second paper he touched on the sociology of scarcity and suggested possible measures to reduce drought, such as introducing a change in cropping pattern, irrigation, and economic utilization. While describing how famine accelerates

\*See A Summary of remaining papers.—Editor

\*\*This paper has been dropped.—Editor

social change he cited the increase in the cases of proselytization.

SINHA discussed in his paper the problem of regional economic development in Chotanagpur with special reference to the land question; while discussing the separatist tendencies among the tribes, he recommended a crash programme of education and a set of social legislations for ameliorating their condition.

In the discussion following Singh's and Sinha's papers, Ekka, a Christian tribal from Chotanagpur, pointed out that most of the tribal land had already been transferred before the final survey and settlement of Ranchi district. The Bhuinhari Survey of 1869 had covered only the 'royal' villages, which comprised only 1/25 of the total cultivated area and by 1908(?) when the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was passed 9/10 of the Bhuinhari and Khuntkatti land had passed to non-tribals. He suggested that together with the scheduled tribes other underprivileged communities too should be helped against indebtedness and famine. The government should make sure that state cooperatives and fair price shops are not taken advantage of by rich non-tribals, and land alienated for public central undertakings is not palmed off to private non-tribal land-speculators. Land enactments, such as the 1968 Bihar Scheduled Areas Act and the 1969 Chotanagpur Tenancy Act Amendment, which were meant to close the loopholes of land alienation, should be brought to the notice of the beneficiaries in the city and country side. With the progress of industrialization there were more encroachments on tribal land in municipal areas, he said. Some tribals had expressed the opinion that the tribals were at a disadvantage in urban areas because they had to sell urban land to poor tribals at a low price. Perhaps a new amendment concerning remunerative transfer of urban tribal land should be worked out after consulting the tribal people concerned.

D P SINHA touched on two points highlighted by Singh : (1) that land had been passing legally or illegally from the tribals to the non-tribals, and non-tribals to the tribals, and among the poor tribals and rich tribals themselves; (2) that Chotanagpur Tenancy Act was inadequate, and new legislation was required to plug the loopholes in the law. Citing the case of Banari, Sinha added, "there are four different kinds of land owning groups: (1) The Hindu landowners who have lived in the area before the introduction of CNT Act, (2) the tribals under CNT Act, (3) the nomadic tribals who are not covered in CNT Act, and (4) the non-tribals/tribals who have acquired land irregularly. We have to understand these in order to understand the land problems in Chotanagpur".

Regarding the introduction of new crops and its relation with money-lending, Sinha, referring again to Banari, said : "In 1956 only 1/2 acre of land was under potato cultivation in Banari, but in 1966 potato was cultivated in over 300 acres. Here the moneylenders competed effectively with the Block sponsored cooperatives and the mission supported cooperatives by establishing

a network of socio-economic ties with the farmers. However, in course of time the farmers became aware of the potato market, and tried to maximise their profit by selling their products in open market and, often, by saving a part of the income for reinvestment for the next crop".

VIDYARTHI, commenting on Singh's statement regarding the failure of Sarvodaya movement in Chotanagpur, said, "In Chotanagpur we have not one type of agrarian movement, the legislations have made different impacts in different regions. Sometimes the tribals are placed at a disadvantage because of social legislation. We are talking of integration, but we have stopped the tribals from selling lands even within the municipal limits. If they were permitted to sell they would have got better price. As it is now the land of the poor tribal is being transferred to the educated tribal".

Criticizing the view that laws relating to land need strengthening, Sirsalkar said, "he did not understand how legislation alone will stop the alienation of land and moneylending. In spite of social legislation in these two fields, i.e. moneylending and alienation of land, in Maharashtra land was passing from the lands of tribals to non-tribals and unauthorised and unscrupulous moneylenders in the tribal areas were exploiting the people to a greater extent. The tribals had closer ties with these moneylenders, on whom they had to depend for borrowing money for both productive and unproductive purposes. The government of Maharashtra have extended the scheme of eradication of "Palemodi system" in tribal areas and it has proved successful in the eradication of unauthorised moneylending to a greater extent. Sheer legislation cannot stop the moneylending and transfer of land".

ROY BURMAN made a general comment on the tribal situation. In describing the economic development of the tribes the Seminar should keep in view the stratification already existing in tribals society. The tension among the tribals about transfer of land showed that while the non-tribals were prepared for a new system of production, the tribals were not.

In his paper on Education, Social Change and Political Consciousness among the Tribes of North-East India, Dube explained the relation between education and social development. He also tried to establish that among the tribes who had modernized themselves, there was a higher percentage of literacy, than among the Hinduized tribes who had followed Sanskritization. He further noted that education and high percentage of literacy influenced political participation and awareness.

SRIVASTAVA spoke on the problem of tribal education in Pasighat.\* He discussed four problems which needed to be tackled for the development of tribal education in NEFA. These were (i) motivation for receiving education, (ii) facilities for education, (iii) medium of instruction in schools, and (iv) type of curriculum. He also gave certain suggestions, (a) education should be

\* Sriniva's paper has been dropped.



need-oriented, and (b) students should be made conscious of the fact that they can develop their own economy by taking to horticulture and cottage industry.

Commenting on Srivastava's paper, Aram said that "though there was need for opening polytechnic schools in NEFA, his experience in Pasighat had been that students wanted to become administrators. As to the condition of schools, there are neither science courses nor science teachers."

About Srivastava's suggestion concerning the introduction of regional language beyond primary school level in order to cut the barrier of isolation among the tribes, KAR said that the regional language was being used as medium of instruction in the Bodo-speaking areas of Assam, but the Bodos have now rejected the scheme. Pandit informed that the Administration of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands had decided to introduce Nicobari language at the primary level and Hindi beyond that.

BOSE deplored the current tendency to use several languages in schools. While criticising the "very antiquated methods of education" he invited attention to Gandhiji's views on education. Gandhiji had said: "In my opinion the existing system of education, apart from its association with an utterly unjust government, is defective, in three most important respects: (i) It is based upon foreign culture to the almost entire exclusion of indigenous culture; (ii) it ignores the culture of the heart and the head, and confines itself simply to the head, (iii) real education is impossible through a foreign medium".

VIDYARTHI pointed out that the educated tribals did not want to teach. "From where will the teachers come"?, he asked.

Commenting on Dube's paper, MAJUMDAR said, "The Garos think Christianity and education go together. After a child gets into a school, he is regarded as a Christian even by his *Songsarek* (non-Christian) parent. During my fifteen years of stay among the non-Christian Garos I found only one literate male who continues to regard himself as a *Songsarek*".

In presenting his paper, 'Problems of Administration of Tribes of Northeast India', HALDIPUR discussed at some length questions of tribal policy and processes of change and integration. He argued that a single-line administration with proper leadership could bring about a renaissance of tribal life and culture. It should be remembered that dissatisfied officials posted in the interior could serve no purpose: the workers should not be distracted from their main task by a too heavy burden of paper work.

ROY BURMAN wanted to know how one could ensure leadership in single-line administration. HALDIPUR replied that "the single-line administration implies an integrated approach where policies and programmes are properly harmonised. People with whom administrators are dealing are indivisible. They cannot understand departments vying with each other. This is more so in tribal areas. One can ensure a proper leadership by orientation, understanding the common objective and by having the type of leaders who follow the principles of 'interest' and 'non-interference' in the working of other

departments. He has no answer to the question as to what should be done when leadership fails as this would affect any organisation on any canvass.

MANKEKAR thought that information about measures taken by the government to ensure security was scanty. He was of the opinion that on the borders there were very doubtful people of doubtful allegiance. HALDIPUR said that he was not in a position to say anything about security. He added :

It may, however, not be correct to say that on the borders there were very doubtful people of doubtful allegiance. During the 1962 Chinese aggression, there were a large number of people who rendered great help. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to highlight the negative aspect and focus the shortcomings and not spot out the incidents where people stood firm and did some constructive work. The process of integration is not one generation process. In spite of isolation, the way many tribal leaders reacted and helped, needs to be appreciated, understood and consolidated.

## AFTERNOON SESSION

July, 12 1969

While presenting his paper, Tribal Solidarity Movement in India, SINHA classified the movements into five broad categories, namely (1) ethnic and tribal revolt movements of the 18th and 19th century, (2) reform movements, (3) inter-tribal movements, (4) secessionist movements on borders, and (5) pockets of violent movements, such as Naxalite movement. He argued that all these could be termed as solidarity movements. "In terms of operational solidarity," he said, "we find a village solidarity, a tribal solidarity, or a clan solidarity. But these movements assign some kind of solidarity to larger entities. I would not like to call them political movements because of their diverse cultural contents. The problem of integrating the relatively isolated ethnic groups has always been with us, but in the post-Independent India, the growing intensity of contact and extension of political opportunities to the tribals have caused a situation which concerns us at the moment. To understand the situation we need to have a closer look at the tribal solidarity movement, which may be studied in the following contexts : (i) location of group, (ii) demography and region, (iii) level of economy, (iv) level of education, (v) cultural development and reform groups, and (vi) pattern of articulation with the non-tribals.

In the discussion that followed Sinha's talk, Ray invited attention to the Benagli concept of *bhadraloka* as an example of how new terms may arise in response to changing social circumstances. The terms *bhadraloka* and *chhotaloka* did not appear in the medieval or even late 19th century Bengali literature, the former was unknown until 1834 when the Fort William College was established. Perhaps one of the Englishmen of that college asked some the term *bhadraloka*. Similar origin of the term *Babu* may be traced from the French *nouveaux riches* which finds a reference in *Naba Babu Bilas*. We have seen in history that new elites acquire new terms which need to be analysed for an understanding of the new situation. In Bengal the cultural renaissance was not an organic growth, but rather an induced renaissance. What we are seeing today in Jharkhand is not an induced renaissance. The terms may have been introduced in the 19th century, but the substance of the conceptions underlying them was there even before. The phenomenon of secular ranking was not unknown to the peasant Bengal. But what is happening today in tribal belt may be different and the elite may be inducing too much.

Commenting on the role of the elite in tribal movements, THAKKAR said, "Unrest rebellion or hostility in a particular area—need not necessarily mean a genuine discontent on the part of the entire masses of that particular tribal community. There is a possibility of a dominant elite or a minority almost imposing its will on its fellow beings and creating movement of unrest

especially when such an imposition is carried through with the help of a machinery of violence evolved by the dominant minority. As one looks back, at the year 1955 in Nagaland, one finds that there did exist unrest of a sort, but there was also a larger section of the population which really did not have any serious complaint against the rest of the country. But in about a year the entire region was suddenly enveloped by unexpected events. The lives of the people were thrown in danger, and the practical utilitarian minded Nagas whose first concern was to survive had to bow before this dangerous development.

"We must remember that according to the traditional Naga outlook on life, a thing like martyrdom would appear to be the height of folly. A man is expected to come out victorious in a battle or a struggle. If he loses or gets killed, he is not thought to be worth of any particular praise. The act of dying for the sake of conviction or a cause is something which is not quite intelligible to them. There is also present in the Naga nature a good deal of attraction for adventure and a certain fondness for brinkmanship. A Naga would try going upto the brink and in the process if it becomes evident that a further step would mean disaster there would be no hesitation on his part to appreciate reality and turn back or even completely give up the adventure. We ought to take into account all these traits and factors while analysing a situation of unrest or discontent."

THAKKAR took the opportunity to correct what seemed to him a wrong impression created by certain references made in the seminar regarding the Naga situation. He said, "Though the intimacy between the Nagas and the rest of the country may not have been as much as it should be, it was there all the same in a small or big way. There were cases of many friendly exchanges between the Naga elders and the Ahom kings, inspite of the fact that one of the early Ahom kings was rather harsh with the Nagas. The Ahom kings were given asylum and protection by the Nagas when the Burmese invaded Assam. One of the kings married a Naga girl. The final court of appeal in the old days for many of the Naga tribes was the Ahom kings, seat at Sibsagar in Assam. The contacts—though never completely stopped—were minimised during the British days due to a definite policy adopted by the British rulers. When the British finally left India our leadership was not wholly unaware of the feeble nature of the country's contacts with the Naga area and some of the other neighbouring hill regions. There was in fact a sense of sorrow on part of the enlightened leadership over our inability to associate the Naga people with our freedom struggle. When we got Independence we did not forget our responsibility towards our brethren in the hills of Northeast India. However too much hurry to do too much good all of a sudden perhaps produced effect contrary to our expectations. Whatever the case we did not ignore the tribals or the border people".

ARAM said, "The rebel movement in Nagaland has reached a stage of



peace without settlement. In Manipur everybody irrespective of political affiliation wants a full-fledged state. In Mizo hills there is a revolt. Despite efforts by the government, there is discontentment and violence all over the area. It has been found that the government accedes to the people's demand only when there is a revolt and threat of violence. If we want to bring about stability in the North-east, we should remove the present imbalance in political status among Nagaland, Manipur, NEFA and the new hill state."

THAKKAR, who disagreed with Aram, said, "It is incorrect to say that but for the violent struggle by them, the Nagas would not have got all that they have got now. In fact a special committee of the Constituent Assembly—which among others included some distinguished members of the tribal communities of the Northeast—was asked to go into the question of a suitable structure of administration. What was lacking was an adequate knowledge of the nature and the way of life of the people. It is not at all correct to say that if the Nagas had not gone on the war path nobody would have listened to them. A proper dialogue with the leaders, or even an agitation without violence for just and reasonable demands would certainly have evoked sympathetic response from the rest of the nation. The aspirations of the people would have certainly been taken note of. While talking about the so-called cease-fire or peace, we should not forget that, though the peace-period might have generated some favourable climate for integration, it has also brought into play certain elements for integration and has also brought into play certain elements of danger or disintegration. Whatever might be the reason or explanation, we have to remember that it was during the very peace-period that the active involvement of the Chinese with the Naga underground took place. Peace, therefore, cannot be taken at present as an unmixed blessing. A false sense of security can put us into greater difficulty in future. No one would be happier than I if it ultimately turns out that the peace period was indeed an unmixed blessing". Linking the argument to his earlier point, he said, "These facts show that there is every possibility of a minority disturbing the growth of health tendencies by resorting to violence and creating a risky, unhealthy dangerous unrest, and even an unjustified rebellion. We must take this aspect into account while analysing the situations of hostility or the movements for solidarity".

Referring to the lack of solidarity within the tribal groups in Nagaland Haldipur said that there was no all-pervasive concept of 'Nagas' earlier. Even as late as 1955, inter-tribal feuds took place.

In the earlier days, the Naga government servants took interest in the Naga Club and later in the Naga National Council, since they were the educated elite who normally got into the government. When they had to give up their interests in politics, the vacuum was filled in by other elements. Secondly, after independence, in a sincere desire to develop the area, a number of people from other parts were inducted into Nagaland. They carried with them the

sacred-pollution concept. Thirdly, the foreign missionaries left a vacuum which could have been filled by missionaries from rest of the country in places where Christianity had taken roots. Certain sacred-secular symbols were used by some elements to consolidate their positions and to build up a sense of solidarity by posing a concept of threat to their survival. DUBEY drew attention to the existence of factions in tribal movements and asserted that like the old myth of caste solidarity the fiction of the tribal solidarity was obvious from the present happenings.

SWARUP said that by providing separate provisions for scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in the Constitution of India a new political solidarity had been ascribed to these groups. Thus the political status has made them come together for their development and the reservation of seats and services have further increased their political consciousness.

Commenting on Sinha's observation that separatist movements do not occur after the cultural integration of the tribals with their neighbours reaches a certain point, Abbi said. "Sinha seems to think there is a point of no return in cultural integration, though he is unable to specify it yet. I think his search is futile, there is no such point. In this context I would like to draw Sinha's attention to the frequent occurrence of schisms in culturally homogeneous groups and ask him to relate his view of the development of separatist movements to such occurrences. As to Sinha's typology, I feel that solidarity may be an unintended consequence of the movement rather than one of its main aims. I wonder how accurate would it be to call such a movement a solidarity movement".

While agreeing with Abbi's comment regarding the point of no return in cultural integration, MAHAPATRA stressed the importance of taking into account not only cultural similarities or differences, but also political motives. As an illustration, he cited the case of Bhumij of Manbhum, whom Sinha had studied intensively. After Independence, the Bhumij had changed the name of their pan-Bhumij organization, from the Bhumij Kshatriya Association. This was not a nominal change, but one motivated, as stressed by the members themselves during the Association's meetings, by the new need to find a level of solidarity with other Adivasi groups of Chota-nagpur. Mahapatra wondered whether because of the attractions of the constitutional privileges the Bhumij might not be tempted to accentuate these tendencies of solidarity.

## SEVENTH BUSINESS SESSION

### MISCELLANY

July 14, 1969

Chairman-Modeator: Professor S.K. Srivastava

Rapporteur : Dr. T.N. Pandey

- Speakers : (1) S.L. Doshi: Tribals: An Assimilationist Society and National Integration.
- (2) L.K. Mahapatra: Social Movements among Tribes of India.
- (3) D.R. Mankekar: Understanding the Tribals on our North-eastern Border.
- (4) B.B. Goswami : The Tribes of Assam: A few comments on their societal and cultural ties with the non-tribes.
- (5) D.N. Majumdar: A Study of Tribe-Caste Continuum and the Process of Sanskritization among the Bodo-Speaking Tribes of the Garo Hills.
- (6) O.K. Moorthy : The Tribal Situation in South India.

Participants : B.L. Abbi, P.R. Sirsalkar, S.R.K. Chopra, L.P. Vidyarthi, B.K. Roy Burman, Phillip Ekka, O.K. Moorthy, S.P. Sinha, M.N. Srinivas, N.K. Bose, R.N. Haldipur, D.R. Mankekar, T.N. Pandey, L.K. Mahapatra, A.K. Saran, T.N. Pandit, D.R. Dhir, R.D. Sanwal, D.N. Majumdar, B.B. Swaroop.

ABBI found Doshi's definition of 'integration' unsatisfactory. SIRSALKAR thought that safeguards were a must for uplifting the tribal people. CHOPRA said that 'acceptance' was not 'integration' and even the assumption that tribals had accepted the news economic political and social values was open to question. There has not been an 'overdose of benefits' at all.

ROY BURMAN thought that breaking of isolation by itself was not integration. Ekka made a plea for a revision of the safeguards in order to ensure that they were observed. The tribal people live from hand to mouth and they would take time to come up to the level of dominant society. He would like to work for integration through the leaders of different tribal societies.

VIDYARTHI thought that Doshi was talking not about integration; perhaps he had interaction in mind. The poor tribal people should be given preference in matters of economic and educational facilities.

MOORTHY believed that the safeguards remained only on the paper. There are still various interest-groups that exploit the tribal people. Such abuses have to be checked.

SRINIVAS said that the concept of 'scheduling' was very important. The 'Scheduled Caste' or the 'Scheduled Tribe' is a heterogeneous category and its stratified nature should be realized. There has been considerable political and economic change in the areas in which tribes live. We have to take note of this in considering the "schedule idea". A systematic study by the social scientists of the effects of scheduling is urgently needed for influencing policy in the 1980s.

BOSE recalled that Article 46 of our Constitution states, "State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. It has been, however, our feeling that the task of liberating any section of the people from all forms of exploitation can be achieved only when the total system under which they live can be reformed completely, and rendered free of the taint of exploitation. A sectional approach to the problem is likely to prove ineffective.

"One speaker has suggested that an elite should be helped to arise among each tribal community, and it is they who can help the community to modernize itself. This elite, working at the political level, can also help in securing major improvements in the tribe's social and economic life.

"His personal feeling in this respect was that, even if constitutional rights are secured, and duly exercised by the elite on behalf of the community which it represents, there is something more which is desirable. It has been our experience in India that the elites become a class by themselves who are not always guided by the interests of the masses whom they represent."

"Gandhiji, therefore, thought that true Swaraj will be attained only when the masses gain the power 'to control authority when abused'. The way to prepare for this condition lies through constructive activity and civil disobedience, if necessary. It is only when the 'masses' have attained this power that their constitutional rights will truly become operative, the law will bear fruit. It is interesting that Gandhiji held that civil disobedience lay within the constitutional rights of the citizens."

In his reply, DOSHI said that the economic base in integration was very important.

MAHAPATRA'S paper was taken up for discussion.

HALDIPUR said that there was likely to be certain amount of instability in any group in the process of acculturation. If such discontent or frustration does not endanger the social base of the community or is endemic to it, it is not necessary to feel too much concerned. The fluid values of people due to culture contact are likely to result in social movements. It is necessary to



know the value system of that community and it is desirable to ensure that there is no emotional displacement and to avoid its becoming the core of the community life.

SINHA mentioned some movements, such as the Sajahur(?) movement, which had no connection with Christianity. Mankekar believed that much of the discontent among the tribals stemmed from their political consciousness. ROY BURMAN stressed the role of traditional and modern elites in the social movements. It is important to find the locus of social movements, and in this context the processes such as Sanskritization, westernization, and revitalization or reculturalization will be important. PANDEY called for a more careful use of the term 'intelligentsia'. He did not understand why Prof. Mahapatra did not use terms like "cultural broker", "middleman", or "keyman" in place of "intelligentsia". 'Will it be possible for Prof. Mahapatra to tell us briefly in what ways the social movements he has studied in India are different from the social movements described by I. C. Jarve and Peter Worsley?', he asked.

To ABBI Mahapatra's typology of social movements remained a timeless typology.

In a brief reply, MAHAPATRA differentiated between charismatic leaders and traditional elites and showed how the religious origin of charismatic leaders in the past among the tribal and other ethnic groups in India had given place to what may be called the secular character of charismatic leaders in political context, as for example, in the case of Jaipal Singh. The traditional elites have sometimes also changed their roles in situations of culture-contact and functioned as 'intelligentsia' or 'cultural middle man'. In the very typology of social movements sufficient reference to the value system of a community has been made and the impact of political consciousness and organization as political groups has also been discussed in the body of the paper. He added.

"There is no doubt that there had been Christian influence as one of the causative factors of the emergence of socio-religious movements among the tribes of Chotanagpur, especially of the Messianic type. An authority on social movements, Father S. Fuchs may have some of his facts in detail from a wrong source and hence may be subject to correction, but I have primarily followed the facts offered by him in order to build my interpretations and conclusions.

"It makes non-sense of all our analysis, if you follow Sinha in his observation that the Jharkhand movement is not an example of the solidarity movements among the tribes of Chotanagpur. Comparison of Indian socio-religious movements with Cargo cults of New Guinea and elsewhere has not been attempted in this brief paper, surveying in general the development of social movements among tribes of India. The Cargo cults have no parallels in India except for certain superficial similarities in some abortive cults, for example, the one referred to by Jay among the Hill Maria of Bastar. But the

reasons why Cargo cults as such did not develop in India should be investigated systematically”.

MANKEKAR'S paper was taken up for discussion.

HALDIPUR pointed out that since the Chinese entered Tibet, they had been following a pattern. Firstly, they spoke of the autonomous region of Tibet and H.H. Dalai Lama was made the Chairman. Simultaneously, they selected young Tibetans who were sent to the School of Minority at Peking for training. They also sent some Chinese workers to help the Tibetans in agriculture and health programmes. Later, they started building up the image of Panchen Lama and discrediting Dalai Lama, particularly after the latter's departure. In the meantime, the trained Tibetan young men returned, fully brainwashed to take up local leadership.

Some of the Tibetans who came into NEFA narrated the harrowing story how this inter-generational conflict was created and how their sons started publicly abusing their parents.

In a democratic country like ours, our methods are different.

ROY BURMAN agreed with Mankekar that we needed an Institute for research and social work in the Himalayan region, but he was not sure whether the Constitution was adequate to meet the needs of modernization.

MRS. TERHUJA said that the press was one of the mean of communicating our ideas and it should help us to understand each other better. But often the reporters read their own feeling into a situation and facts are not reported correctly. Naga names are often misspelled and when facts and names are not reported correctly, it makes them angry rather than lead them towards understanding.

Christianity and education have ushered the Nagas into a wider fellowship with Indians and other fellow human beings. If the acceptance of Christianity by the Nagas is to be taken as an isolating factor we are going against the very principle of India's secularism. The Christian missionaries are often attacked for creating trouble but it is generally based on false reports. The Naga church is already in the process of becoming indigenous and all operational work is in our hands today. The indifference of the National Christian Council of India toward the Naga trouble and church affairs is regretted.

The involvement of church in recent political situation causes many a misunderstanding. There was no mediating party available, therefore, the Church stepped in to initiate peace move.

SRINIVAS reminded that no Indian party or political organization was in a position to permit secession of any part of India. We must also recognize the dynamic nature of the Constitution. The Indian Constitution must not be seen as timeless. The Constitution in 1990 will be different from what it is today. He emphasized that it should be our responsibility to feed information to the intelligentsia about the tribal problems of our country.

VIDYARTHI called for efforts to collect detailed and true reports of the troubles in tribal areas. Some selected keymen from different tribal areas should be given refresher courses in Indian culture. The tribal research institutes can do this well.

SARAN expressed his sense of anguished puzzlement over one major point made by Mankekar and reiterated and illustrated by Haldipur. Mankekar cited the work of the Chinese Institute of Monorities and Haldipur had given a vivid illustration of its techniques in action. "It seems to me that they are greatly impressed by Chinese methods and techniques and Mankekar recommends that we should take a leaf from the Book of Mao—and even eventually joining the people of the Book of Mao—is beyond any comprehension. I have no doubt that whatever the right approach to the tribal situation may or may not be, India cannot follow the Chinese, however effective it may have been in Tibet and other places. If the Communist methods, strategies, and techniques are the only way to success, India should choose to fail rather than adopt the Chinese Communist techniques. But even if one adopts the theory of the neutrality of means and techniques, there are clear limits to this neutrality. Surely we cannot use totalitarian technique to propagate democratic ideals. Surely we cannot utilize the Chinese methods adopted in Tibet to deal with the traditional and tribal religions of India. Whatever may be one's view of the relationship between means and ends, the methods adopted by a democracy must be compatible with the basic principles of democracy. Hence I think that the Chinese and Soviet parallels and plans of operation are integrally related to the Communist world-view, which has not been accepted by India.

DHIR suggested that the public administrators in these areas should be sociologists and public relations officers to an extent, but that could not be at the cost of their primary duty of being efficient administrators.

PANDIT found the role of administrator very insufficiently explained. We must have some definite guidelines for administrators.

SANWAL congratulated Mankekar on his sharply highlighting the necessity to build bridges of understanding between the northeast and other parts of India and to produce quickly scientific literature dealing with the peoples and cultures of NEFA. He, however, expressed his unhappiness over Mankekar's reference to the Communist Chinese experiment with the integration of the sectional minorities in that country. He felt certain that the adoption of such methods would not bring dividends in the case of India with its completely different political set up. The Fox Indian experiment undertaken by the Department of Anthropology of the University of Chicago some decades ago proved a failure as the leadership of the selectivity trained batch of the Fox Indians was not accepted by the community and nor were there mechanisms to force it to stay on in the community. An experiment like this

will hardly succeed in a democratic country.

In his reply MANKEKAR pointed out that the Indian press had done very little in promoting good relations between the different segments of the population, including the tribal groups. He felt that the press should build up the image of India—it should bring out the compositeness of Indian culture.

He added that half truths got reported not only due to the laziness of the reporter but also because of the officers' reluctance to tell the truth. Newsmen are always in a hurry for reporting hot news, they don't probe into problems as intimately as they should. He emphasized the need for an agency which will sponsor studies in depth of our problems, including the tribal ones. In a democratic country there should be a general awareness of problems which exist in the society.

MANKEKAR said: "We do need to indoctrinate our people in Indianness and if Chinese techniques are effective in this respect, I don't mind taking them."

In the afternoon, B. B. Goswami, D. N. Majumdar and O. K. Moorthy presented their papers. The three papers were then discussed together.

ROY BURMAN wanted Majumdar to explain the nature of contra-acculturation and contra Sanskritization among the tribal people that he described in his paper. He pointed to the lack of knowledge among the local officers about such matters as shifting cultivation or soil in that area.

SWAROOP found Moorthy's suggestion that democratic decentralisation process in tribal areas should be abolished as the political leaders hindered the economic development untenable.

MAHAPATRA explained that integration of tribes should be with local society and not with Delhi.

MAJUMDAR informed that plain tribes did not practise shifting cultivation. This was due to the geographical conditions. Even hill people, when they started living in valleys, took up plough cultivation. The remark that non-tribes are patrilineal is not generally supported by evidence. Patriliney cannot be taken generally as an adjunct of Sanskritization. The Koch of the Garo Hills, for example, though not scheduled as a tribe, have preserved their matrilineal clans despite Sanskritization.

No correlation can be drawn between certain linguistic groups and conversion to Christianity. As the Bodo speakers are living in the valley surrounded by Hindus, it is only natural that they have been most influenced by the surrounding Hindu population. Even among the Bodo speakers those who are living outside the reach of Hindus, for instance, the Garo, have been least influenced by Hinduism, they have been drawn towards Christianity.

The mistrust may be there between the Christians and non-Christians in the Mizo Hills, when the author worked intensively. But this remark cannot be taken generally for all the areas. No such thing can be observed among the Christians and non-Christians in the Garo Hills and perhaps also in the Khasi



PANDEY agreed with Majumdar that shifting cultivation should be regarded as a phenomenon of ecological adaptation. J. D. Freeman and Harold Conklin among others have done interesting work on shifting cultivation from this point of view.

## EIGHT BUSINESS SESSION

July 15, 1969

### MOVEMENTS AND ADMINISTRATION

Chairman—Moderator : Prof. L.P. Vidyarthi

Rapporteur : Dr. T.N. Pandey

- Speakers: (1) Philip Ekka : Revivalist Movements among the Tribals of Chotanagpur.
- (2) S.K. Srivastava\* : A Note on Tribal Situation in India.
- (3) Parimal Chandra Kar\*\* : The Character and Consequences of Early British Administration in Garo Hills.
- (4) Brij Behari Swarup\* : Nyaya Panchayat—as an Indicator of Tribal Situation: Study of a Naya Panchayat in the Tribal Setting in Rajasthan.
- (5) Nityananda Das\* : National Projects and Displacement of Tribals.

Participants: N.Vyas, S.L. Doshi, N. Das, D.R. Mankekar, B.K. Roy Burman, N.K. Bose, S. Fuchs, Niharranjan Ray, B.L. Abbi, S.P. Sinha, M.N. Srinivas, R.D. Sanwal, M. Zuberi.

VIDYARTHI opened the session by congratulating the authorities of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla, and the Centre for the Advanced Study in Sociology, Delhi University, for organizing this Seminar and made an appeal to follow up with such seminars in the future.

First, EKKA presented his paper and he was followed by Prof. Srivastava. These two papers were then discussed together.

VYAS wanted to know if the movements described by Ekka played any part in the economic development of the area. Doshi wanted to know about the pattern of social stratification which might have emerged as a result of these movements. The Bhils of Rajasthan are now stratified into four sections—original Bhils, Protestant Bhils, Catholic Bhils, and the Bhagat Bhils. These sections are more or less endogamous, though hypergamy is practised by the latter three groups. Such an enquiry has bearing on the problem of integration, for a more stratified society is prone to be better integrative.

DAS reminded that revivalist movements among tribals may or may not lead to open insurrection. Gen. Campbell in his book on the suppression of Mariah sacrifice among Kandhas of Orissa specifically stressed the point that

\*See A Summary of remaining papers.—Editor

\*\*This paper has been dropped.—Editor

tribals who fall victim to traditions were exploited by outsiders. When tribals come out into the open there is an insurrection and it was and is still suppressed. When it remains in incipient conditions, various complications arise.

All these movements are inherently *survival* movements against incursions into conventional and traditional rights in land forests. That is why the Saoras, Koyas, and Santals revolted in the past. Hence it has to be concluded that tribal unrest in various parts of India is basically a movement for survival.

MANKEKAR said that we could not escape demands of secession and autonomy in a democracy. Development of economic and trade relations with other parts of India are essential for the integration of the Himalayan people. It is only in this way that they will develop a vested interest in the economy of the country.

BOSE commented on tortuous ways through which culture change passed in Chotanagpur. This finds a parallel in the history of Bengal in the 19th century. Bengal's economy was in ruins at the end of the 18th century, and Bengalis decided to avail themselves of the new opportunities of employment thrown up by England's commercial economy and administration. Parallel with this change in the economic field, changes also began to take place in the social, religious and intellectual spheres. At first, there was a flood of Western influence. Conversion to Christianity, commitment to rationalism, agnosticism and atheism. This was followed, among some sections of Hindu population by a revival of interest in the roots of Indian culture. A reassessment was also made of Western civilization, and some elements of that civilization were selectively incorporated in the renewed Indian civilization.

This process has not come to an end yet. And if one follows the course of these movements, one notices a large number of parallels to what is happening in the tribal world of Chotanagpur today. The advantage in the case of Bengal was that this history of culture change could be fully documented.

FUCHS wanted to know the way in which Jharkhand movement was related to the revivalist movements.

RAY recalled that most of the movements took place between the 13th and the 16th centuries. They were also concerned with the people who were on the fringe and they brought significant social change. They were directed mainly against Brahmanism. These movements invariably had economic elements and we should look at them from the economic point of view. We should not lump the whole Himalayan region in one category; this will be oversimplification. There are significant ethnic and cultural differences among the people of this region. It is true that some of the measures taken by the government are not appropriate, but it is dangerous to give district by district autonomy. We must keep in mind that economic problems have to be solved by economic measures. If some people of the northern areas have lost their markets, we have to find markets for them.

ABBI suggested that notion of autonomy should be clarified, and we must examine the role of autonomy *vis-a-vis* other methods—social, economic—of integration.

SRINIVAS wondered if they were not simplyfying the whole problem of that complexity when they were trying to understand the entire situation as a case of land scarcity. The social reality is extremely complex and let us not reduce it to absurd simplicity.

SANWAL pointed out that Srivastava's thesis for Kumaon and Garhwal was not tenable. This Bhotias have always identified themselves with the people of Kumaon.

BOSE thought that quick recognition of regional claims would take the edge off many of the tensions which are now disturbing our political and social life. We should look a little more closely at these sectional demands of 'self-determination of nationalities'. If we examine these carefully, we discover that among each of these 'nationalities' are 'classes' and 'masses'. Gandhiji's formula was that if each state government made it its primary concern to liberate the masses from subordination to the classes, if the masses could be educated and organized to keep 'authority in check when it is abused', then a new kind of national unity would arise in India. This would reduce the competition and tension among the rising (urban) middle-classes which is one of the results of the unequal progress of modernization in different parts of India.

ZUBERI recalled that the British policy differed from time to time and from region to region. The British policy of non-interference was a kind of interference in itself.

In his reply EKKAR remarked that Christianity had brought about social stratification among the tribals of Chotanagpur. The Tana Bhagatas are divided into different groups, but they do marry among themselves.

In his reply SRIVASTAVA emphasized that regional development should be encouraged for efficient economic and political development of India. He said that ethnic identity could be exploited by both the government and the people.

Discussion on Kar's paper was taken up. Sanwal wanted to know more about the "higher symbols" which the Garo were reported to have taken up? Majumdar said that the Garos at no time remained absolutely isolated from the neighbouring peoples. This is evident from the fact the Garos inhabiting the areas adjacent to the plains of Assam and East Pakistan are indistinguishable today in many cultural features from their neighbours in the plains.

SRINIVAS wanted to know how far the Brahmaputra operated as a line of communication in this area.

BOSE informed that the Brahmaputra valley served as the route along which Brahmanical culture came into Assam from perhaps U.P. Of course, there were with Bengal by means of river-ways, which affected Sylhet and



Silchar. But the ruins of the North Indian order of temples in Tezpur, and on an escarpment as one enters the NEFA at Subansiri, show clearly that the local influence on architecture was from the west (U.P.) rather than from the south (Bengal). The Garos came under the influence of the Rajas of Susang (Brahmin), who had settled on the banks of the Someswari. So that, these river valleys served as the routes along which Hindu civilization advanced into this mountainous territory.

ABBI felt that the paper needed a better organization; it should be focussed to a particular problem.

DOSHI informed GAMALI was the hereditary leader of and Bhangarihas as selected leaders. In their selection personal qualities like honesty, sincerity, etc. are taken into consideration.

DAS'S paper was taken up. SINHA paper was also taken up. SINHA thought that the process of rehabilitating the displaced persons land for land policy was not possible in Bihar since it invilved too much resentment and discontent among the parties concerned. BOSE recalled the imperfect rehabilitation of the Scheduled Tribes in Dandakarnya. The Dandakaranya Development Authority (DDA) set aside 25% of the prepared land for tribal rehabilitation, along with a monetary assistance amounting to about 1,700 rupees per family, given to them as outright grant. Refugees are given over Rs. 3,000 as long-term loan for the same purpose. The rehabilitation of the refugees is directly under the DDA. But the Madhya Pradesh and Orissa Governments are entrusted with the rehabilitation of the tribal people, after the DDA has cleaned the land and handed over the money to the respective state governments. Unfortunately, the efficiency of the state governments in this affair is low; and they do not wish to permit the DDA to take full responsibility of the task. The state governments seem to feel that their sovereignty or control over the tribal population would be reduced if they handed over charge to the DDA. The latter would be a better step and the tribal communities would prosper economically if they were dealt with by the DDA in the same manner as the latter are dealing with the refugees.

VIDYARTHI suggested an intensive study of the areas in which different industries were set up. In his reply Das said that the tribal people should be provided not only with money but also with work and other facilities. They should also have a share in the benefits of industrialization.

NINTH BUSINESS SESSION

TRIBAL LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

July 16, 1969

Chairman-Moderator : Professor L.P. Vidyarthi

Rapporteur : Biswajit Sen

- Speakers: (1) L.P. Vidyarthi: An Appraisal of the Leadership Pattern among the Tribes of Bihar.
- Develop- (2) M.N. Srinivas: Some Aspects of Political Areas and R.D. Sanwal ment in the North-Eastern Hill of India.
- (3) B.K. Roy Burman: Integrated Area Approach to the Problems of the Hill Tribes of North-East India.

Participants: S.P. Sinha, Philip Ekka, N. Das, D.D. Kapoor, P.R. Sirsalkar, Niharranjan Ray, D.N. Mankekar, D.K. Moorthy, B.K. Roy Burman, Nicholas Roy, L.P. Vidyarthi, R.D. Sanwal, B. Pakem, Alemchiba Ao, N. Thakkar, M.N. Srinivas.

VIDYARTHI, while presenting his paper, asserted that the most outstanding point in the development of tribal leadership in Bihar was that non-Christian majority which formerly elected Christian members were now mostly electing non-Christian members to represent them in the state legislature. He also emphasised that the tribal area of middle India during the recent times has been exposed to the modern forces owing to the exploitation of various mineral sources and establishment of industrial complex in this region. A section of local people had to face land alienation and a phase of social disruption. The general climate of the country has also given them an impetus to press the demand for the separate state of Jharkhand and also of respective groups which find expression in tribalism, regionalism, etc. press for the maximum advantage. Vidyarthi also mentioned that the tribal groups who are settled in the plains and engaged in agriculture and other occupations are socially, educationally and politically advanced than the other tribes who are nomadic hunters and food-gatherers. The latter groups deserve special economic assistance for their development.

SINHA said that the two general elections in 1967 and 1969 demonstrated that the landlords in all the districts (except Santal Parganas) had their say and that their influence had not diminished.

Ekka held the view that there should be no communal approach in the analysis of the social facts being analysed by social scientists. He said, "it is

not true that the students of these institutions managed by the Missionaries have become active and aggressive." He disagreed with the effort to substitute 'janajati' for 'adivasi', because the term *jati* refers to caste, and 'janjati' would imply that tribals have castes, which is not true.

Das maintained that Tribal Research Institutes and research bodies could be made useful for the understanding of the tribal problems. He mentioned that in Orissa out of 33 tribal legislative assembly constituencies there was only one Christian member and out of 5 Lok Sabha seats there was not one Christian member, but that does not indicate that the Christian converts do not exercise any influence in electoral determination. He said that election symbols played an important role. The adoption of bow and arrow by Gantantra Parishad in elections up to 1961 had a greater mass appeal in Orissa.

KAPOOR held the view that '*jana*' is a system different from the *jati*. One is an organic system and the other a segmentary model.

SIRSALKAR observed that there was an urgent need for creating tribal leadership. In Maharashtra the tribal leaders have vested interests and they are trying to exploit the tribal situation. He held the view that government agencies alone could not do much. The voluntary agencies with devoted workers can help much. Those voluntary agencies who take communal attitude should not be allowed to operate in the tribal areas.

NIHARANJAN RAY expressed the view that '*jana*' is a neutral term, whereas '*jati*' is not. *Jati* is a system while '*jana*' is not a system. '*Jana-jati*' would mean tribal-caste, which should not be used.

MANKEKAR stressed the point that if we went on granting self identity to every tribal group then it would lead to disintegration, because there would be no end to it. He said that the real problem was misunderstanding and lack of better communication.

MOORTHY mentioned that the agents of exploitation remained more powerful in the villages. Steps should be taken to check their activities if we are to improve the condition of the tribals.

ROY BURMAN, while discussing the typology of tribal leadership mentioned that the pattern of leadership was both segmental and multi-dimensional. In the past the leadership at the level of folk-society was tradition-oriented. The recent tradition is to move away from the tradition orientation to the pattern of neo-traditional and rational. Non-official organisations who are working in the tribal areas may also function in a bureaucratic way, and may not be voluntary organisations.

NICHOLS ROY observed that the present leadership in North-Eastern Hill areas happened to be in the hands of a particular religious group (Christians). But they are not influenced by the foreigners. The case of the present political unrest, he held, was due to the growing aspirations of the people of that area.

VIDYARTHI, while replying to the questions, emphasised that he had only analysed the facts and being a social scientist he should not ignore the facts.

New symbols have been adopted by the tribals and once a symbol is created it retains some value since it gives inspiration to the people. Tribal groups have adopted new castes which is a fact. One should not be an idealist, but an analyst, and statement of facts was not wrong.

R.D. SANWAL while presenting the joint paper by Prof. Srinivas and himself mentioned the fact that politically many parts of the North-Eastern Hill Areas (NEFA) came under more intensive administration only with Independence, and culturally most of the north-eastern regions remained outside the mainstream of developments in the rest of India. He held the view that the socio-political problem in NEFA were the result of a growing urge on the part of tribal communities in that region for self-identification. The majority's attitude towards the tribal minorities had brought the minorities more closely together in opposition to the dominant majority. A sense of integration with the rest of the country was rather weak in NEFA and needed to be strengthened. Emotional Integration in a country like India is far from easy. But administrative and political integration is possible. Integration is a growing process and does not mean assimilation for it involves bilateralism. Building of national unity does not stand in the way of enriching diverse groups' tradition, culture and language. Isolation and technological development cannot go hand in hand.

ROY BURMAN while presenting his paper mentioned that a considerable number of educated students entertained separatist ideas which was not because of their class character but because of other socio-cultural factors. Tribal communities are changing fast and a religious and cultural vacuum has been created. Political organisations among the tribal communities of the region come under two categories—(i) authoritarian type, and (ii) republican type. Political ferment is more noticeable among those tribes which have a republican type of political organization.

Student unrest in the region can be related to lack of education facilities, language policy of the government and economic and political aspirations of their respective communities. Integrated planning for development involving not only economic planning but also planning of political strategy and social strategy should be considered.

PAKEM asked whether there could not be a conflict between traditional democracy and modern democracy. He explained that secularism in North-East India means, besides other things, existence of tribal religion along with other religions including Christianity. He was also against the idea of cultivating any kind of tribal Birlas, in preference to socialism, which had already been in existence in the hills, though in a primitive form. He further expressed that the people of North-East India would like to develop their own culture and status with dignity.

ALAMECHIBA AO said, "unless we think about certain media or we have an agency through which we can educate the common people of the north-



eastern tribal groups about our approach by desire, our aim of emotional integration would probably be misunderstood by the people as assimilation. He said that the fear and sentiment expressed by Mrs. Khrieleno are the reflection of average Naga's feeling. The people of Nagaland had always a fear that they would lose their culture, identity and religion, if they were integrated with the plains."

NICHOLS ROY observed that the people of NEFA ethnically and culturally differed from the rest of India's population and the people of his region were treated differently by the plains people. The minority people were ignored by the majority people and the minority group had to take the lead to cultivate the majority group. The hill people would like to protect their culture which is dear to them. Unless the majority group takes a proper attitude towards the minority groups integration would not be possible.

MANKEKAR commented that even the plains Indians there were ethnical and cultural differences. People from one state live in a separate area, *mohalla*, to preserve their culture. It is not that the Nagas and Khasis are treated differently by the plains Indians. Even the rigid caste system prevents mixing or marriage between the inter-caste groups.

THAKKER felt that a humanitarian approach should be taken to integrate NEFA with the rest of India. All have emphasised the role of voluntary agencies which would act as agents. Voluntary agencies with secular nature and with devoted workers, who have better ideas, should work in the region.

SANWAL said that by emotional integration he did not mean that all the diverse groups would come into a common economic and political whole but that all would enjoy freedom of thought, speech etc. and feel that they were all equal. Every individual should get the facility of education and a suitable atmosphere should be created to minimize mutual mistrust between different segments (ethnic, religious or linguistic) of the Indian population. No common religion and culture can be developed because each region and group has its own food habit, dress, dialect and culture. At the theoretical level integration should be discussed because that would help to formulate practical ways and means of achieving interaction. Integration is a two-way process and the majority has many things to learn from the minority.

SRINIVAS remarked that integration does not mean Hinduization, but to bring the different areas and cultures into the mainstream of Indian polity. The people of India should be taught that the people of the hills are as much Indian as the people of other states in the country. He suggested the setting up of a national service cadre in which students from hills and plains would participate. The tribal students should be sent to serve in non-tribal areas and vice-versa.

ROY BURMAN while replying briefly to the comments said that the voluntary organisations of the secular type were doing good to the people. For better understanding between the peoples of the hills and plains, the voluntary

organisations should be encouraged because the social workers are more devoted than the people who are in the organisations run by the government. All solutions should be found in a democratic way. The welfare approach should be given up because that leads to the minority complex. More emphasis should be given to the removal of outside exploitation. An attempt to provide entrepreneurial training may help to meet the problem to some extent and if leaders of industry come up from the hill people, they would be able to participate in the national life at a higher level.

TENTH BUSINESS SESSION

INTEGRATION AND UNDERSTANDING  
IN THE NORTH-EAST

Thursday July 17, 1969

Chairman-moderator : Professor N.K. Bose

Rapporteur : Dr. B.N. Saraswati

- Speakers :
- (1) Mrs. Khrieleno Terhuja: The Christian Church among the Angami Nagas.
  - (2) M. Alemchiba Ao: Problems of Re-adjustment to a New Situation (with special reference to the Naga Tribes)
  - (3) S. Nichols Roy : (Nopaper was contributed)
  - (4) B.K. Gulati\* : Tribes in transition: a danger to national integration.

Participants : B.K. Roy Burman, S.P. Sinha, D.R. Mankekar, N.K. Bose, Natwar Thakkar, Niharranjan Ray, Biswajeet Sen, M. Zuberi, N. Das.

MRS. TERHUJA, herself an Angami, gave an interesting talk on the role of the Christian church among the Angamis, one of the fourteen Naga tribes in Nagaland. Education and Christianity go together. Referring to the isolation of the Nagas from the mainland of India, she said, "we were brought into contact with the outside world by Christianity. Soon after a Christian community was formed, we used to send delegation to attend the Church conferences outside. Today Nagas are in contact with the pastors all over India and we study in theological schools and colleges in other far all away states as well." Referring to the present unrest in Nagaland, she said "it is no use blaming Christian Missionaries. We have to understand the problem in historical context for a people like the Nagas who are making tremendous stride from a primitive society to modernity, perhaps they must necessarily pass through the phases that they are in today. The persistent accusation of foreign missionaries as fomenting the present trouble betrays our lack of understanding of our own affairs. The Nagas see the changes in a different perspective—we have been making attempt to understand India. In our theological schools we are taught about Hinduism and other religions as well. Hostility and distrust arise when we do not have the means to know our neighbours. Only a few Nagas know the tenets of Hinduism or Islam and

\*See A Summary of remaining papers—Editor.

perhaps many plains men have vague ideas about the Naga way of life." She referred in this connection to an incident at Khononia village where one of the villagers was about to be killed by the Indian Army for killing a cow. She added: "regular military force stationed in Nagaland to suppress the rebel Nagas is causing fear and suspicion. Villages have been burnt and churches have been demolished. Many of the Nagas have gone away from their homeland. Owing to the continued unrest and military encampment there is a unique isolation in the Nagas. In many homes the young Nagas have neither appreciation for their traditional values nor sufficient funds to go for the new material culture. There are many Nagas who do not believe in old faith or Christianity. This has arisen out of their frustration. All these factors should be considered while we make an attempt to understand the Naga problem."

ALEMCHIBA AO, an Ao Naga himself, read a paper on the problems of readjustment to the new situation. He added, "the new situation has arisen from two sources, viz., contact with the plains, and foreign contacts which include British administration and American Baptist Mission. Contact with the plains was old. The British administration introduced monetary system which affected the traditional economy to some extent and thereby shifted the enjoyment of wealth from those with plenty of lands and paddy to those in receipt of earnings in cash in those days". On the question of present unrest he said that there were three main causes: (i) pride of ethnic identification, (ii) fear of exploitation, and (iii) love of liberty and independence. Contrary to the happy image of the Chinese in the minds of the Nagas, as given by Mrs. Terhuja, he described that "the Second World War, the recent Sino-Indian and Indo-Pakistan conflicts were testing times for the loyalty of the Nagas. When the security force stationed in Nagaland were pulled out during those conflicts, even the underground Nagas did not take the advantage of this situation. The Nagas, rich and poor alike, donated generously to the National Defence Fund. Such behaviour indicates the attitude of their leaning towards India". He stressed that the "problem is purely political and not economic or social. The need of the present is to solve the political problem". He concluded that in the past few months there had been favourable development and we should take advantage of this opportunity.

NICHOLS ROY, a Khasi and a leader of the APHLC, contended in his talk, "the attacks on Church by various individuals have brought about distrust. The cause of the present unrest in north-eastern hills is not the Christian missionary. A month after the rebellion broke out in Mizo hills he visited and met the church leaders and the staff of the Government College there. In the church documents which were made available to him, the use of religion for politics by the National Mizo Front was clearly repudiated. The missionaries and church, in his opinion, were not responsible for the Mizo rebellion. Referring to Mankekar's earlier statement that isolation was accentuated by the Christian Missionaries, NICHOLS ROY said that he was in complete



agreement with Mrs. Terhuja that "by the advent of Christian Missionaries the isolation was done away with. Whether a cultural or a religious wall has been created between tribals and non-tribals is a matter of opinion. But in the Khasi area it has been definitely minimized. The cultural differentiation between Christian and non-Christian Khasis is not much. If christianity had created the war, why did it not create a wall in other parts of India? There is no doubt that some administrators in North-East India have tried to make Christian missionaries the scape-goats. The lack of understanding between the government and the tribal has mistaken the role of the Christian missionaries. If Christians in India as a whole are alienated from the rest of the Indian population, only then the allegation against the Christian missionaries of Nagaland might hold good. But it is certainly not so. Tracing the history of the Hill State movement from 1947, he said that the Mizos were the first to associate themselves with the Assam Congress but in 1950 there was a change in the attitude of the tribal people. The policies of the government in 1950-1954 were responsible for creating unrest.

NICHOLS ROY did not think economic inequality was the main reason of the trouble. The feeling for a separate Hill State started with the State Reorganization Commission. In 1947, there was a hope that the whole of Assam and the Hills would be formed into Greater Assam, but this was not done. His father was one who wanted to have greater Assam, but the Assamese did not like this. The Assamese leaders dominated after Independence. After Sylhet was given over to Pakistan, the Assamese rejoiced that they were giving up the Bengalees. The Hill State movement was not formed in the early years. But in 1950, Assam administration was partly responsible for generating this movement. The basic discontentment was already there between the plains-men and the hill-men from ancient times on account of trade etc. Between 1954-57, the negative aspect predominated and those who did not believe in it shunted out. His father was one of them. The Assam administration's policy of divide and rule created more resentment. The Hill State movement was wrongly represented. The leaders who happened to be "Christians took the leading part. Another aspect was cultural domination. It was not so evident but the fear of domination was present. The plains tribal people who were assimilated with the Assamese over a long time by living together accepted Assamese language, etc., but they were kept at the lowest level. When the plains tribals came to meet the Hindu ministers they were allowed to wait only in the *verandah*. This injured their sentiment. The linguistic policy was focussed by Assam Sahitya Sabha and not only by individuals. The Sabha claimed that there should be no other language, no other culture, etc." At this NIHARRANJAN RAY interrupted and asked: was it not directed towards Bengali? Nichols Roy replied in affirmative, but added that this was in 1960, the APHLC was formed and there was a shift of terminology from "tribals" to "hillmen". It was realized that unless they had a programme to unite all the

groups, no political move could be organized. Hill-men included all people living in the Hills. This gave a different connotation. The feeling of achievability was not there before 1960, but when all the hill people were thus united they found unity and leadership. The efforts of the government to divide and rule continued between 1960 and 1967. "Naga way is the only way" was suggested by some. Delhi kept meeting the demands of the people. In 1962, the Hill State movement proved strong during the elections. The Mizo Hills were neglected economically, and in the election 75% of the Mixos supported the Hill State move. The tendency towards Naga-like violence was gradually resorted too. In 1963, the Nehru plan for full autonomy was granted. It appeared well on paper. Nehru died in 1964. For one solid year nothing was done. A commission was appointed but his took another year to study the matter. As a result, the Mizos saw that they were not going to get anything. Then they supported the Mizo National Front. Now there was no way to stop it. The Nehru plan was never put into operation. Pataskar's report was different from the Nehru plan. The announcement of 11 September 1968 was somewhat vague. "We do not know what are the full terms of it and it is also not known how it will be finally organized. On our part we need the support of the Nation. For the first time in nation's history all the parties supported the autonomy for our hills except the Jana Sangh. We have the problem of participation, problem of the communication and poor education. The nation has always blamed the Britishers. Greater purpose has to be given to the Hill people. The tendency to think small is natural among the people living in isolation. The real problem has to be faced. What we need today is to see a greater purpose to the hill people in India. The Government of India has brought out the North-East Council for linking up the whole of the North-East area. We of the APHLC accepted this for a fair trial. But unfortunately this is not yet accepted fully by the plains, as well as by the Nagaland government. But if this is accepted it will be good for the whole country".

In the discussion, which followed the statements made by the three speakers from North-East Hill Area, the issue of the Christian Missionary evoked vigorous comments. S.P. SINHA said, "whether the Chruch has been able to break isolation is a mater of investigation because it is easy to say so. The Christian tribals say that whatever isolation has been broken is only for them and not for others; this indeed is a very doubtful proposition". Referring to the distinctions made by Nichols Roy between the Chruch and the mission and that the Missionaries did not approve the political movement and isolation etc., he said, "from the facts that are known to me it is obrious that missionaries and church leaders are two sides of the same coin, one side crying halt to madness and the other side leading the movement and pronouncing the battle cry. How can we reconcile these two? Indigenous Indian Church or self-dependent church named by Indians follows the same policy which its predecessors had been doing all these years". Referring particularly to the

activities of the Christian Missionaries in the Hill State, he said "they are responsible for fanning the basic distrust and fear among the Hillmen for the plains-men. In fact Christian missionaries are there not for advocating a faith but for keeping imperialism alive".

MANKEKAR commented that much of the complaints of foreign missionaries was known. It is a fact that in the 19th century Christian missionaries went to the Hills under the umbrella of the Raj. But what they have been doing there is now obvious in the present situation. Naga Christians are isolated even from the mainstream of Indian Christian life. This is because of political reasons. This is reality.

NIHARRANJAN RAY intervened to say, "We cannot perhaps blame the Christian Mission. But in the course of sixty years there has been mischief. This cannot be denied". Referring to the distinction made between Church and Mission, he further stated that existential meaning was different from the dictionary meaning.

ROY BURMAN felt that the Angamis are emotionally dependent on the Christian missionaries for the various social reforms, such as the stopping of the head hunting practices, etc., which was brought in by the latter. He asked whether in this situation there was a restraint on secularism.

ZUBERI observed that criticism of the role of European Christian missionaries who came to India along with European imperialist expansion should not be construed as an attack on Christianity. Referring to Nichols Roy's point that the term 'Indian Christian missionary' was not acceptable to him because missionary could come only from abroad, Zuberi remarked "sooner we have Christian Churches in India without such Missionaries the easier it would be to integrate Christian communities into the main-stream of Indian life".

ZUBERI further raised the question of proselytization in a secular state. He made a very significant remark, "here is a situation wherein a non-violent and peaceful conversion to Christianity or Islam violates a social order which does not practise it". Referring to the so-called fears of Christians of being assimilated into the Hindu fold, he reminded them that "hardly any country in the world has gone so far as India in giving complete freedom to live according to one's faith, which in some cases seems to include the right to convert others, while the majority community is traditionally averse to proselytization. This proselytization may appear as a threat to the Hindu social order, in the sense that the practice of proselytization in some faiths puts them at an advantageous position with regard to those which do not practice it, especially in a secular state in which all religions are considered to be equal before the law".

NICHOLS ROY tried to touch on the point made by Zuberi. He said, "according to the fundamental rights granted to us by the Constitution there is freedom in the practice of religion and no interference with the propagation

of religion. What is offensive is the use of some sort of force in conversion. To Hindu social order conversive is repugnant. To what faith one will go in for, will not be decided by the government. It should be allowed to the individual to chose his own faith". At this point, PROF BOSE raised a very important question. He said "the system of education introduced by the government does not hold religion as a necessary item in the education of our children. What shall I do as a Hindu if my child's faith is disturbed by the government? Shall I pay the government taxes?" To this question also NICHOLS ROY tried to answer. He said, "as a parent I would say if my way of life does not coincide with the faith, my child will be influenced. Most of us, including Christians, judge ourselves not by practice but by faith and often by their practices not by their precepts". Obviously, Nichols Roy failed to appreciate the social significance of the problem raised by PROF. BOSE.

SEN commented on Mrs. Terhuja's allegations against the Indian Army. In the Western Himalayas, the Army was no problem to the local people, and, therefore, it seemed that in the North-East Hill Area the complaints against the Indian Army were politically motivated. NICHOLS ROY while supporting TERHUJA'S statement added that "in Mizo Hills more than two hundred villages were burnt in the regrouping process. Even loyal villages were also burnt. The cases of burning were much more in Nagaland". He criticised the lack of control of some of the personnel of the Indian Army in Mizo Hills in the initial stages and said "when the Chinese came in NEHA in 1962 they did not misbehave with the people and said that they would return whenever the people wanted them to return. But the Indian Army mistreated villagers. That caused greater bitterness. All the people have suffered". At this point MANKEKAR retorted, "if this is a rebellion the military is bound to be there. So the best way to remove the military is to stop the rebellion". Referring to the statistics given by Mrs. Terhuja regarding the burning of Churches and villages, Thakkar did not think that the figure given by her was correct. He said that there were specific instructions to Army not to touch any place of religious worship. "As far as I know, not a single church was intentionally burnt in the Ao area. This is true to a greater or lesser extent in case of areas in the immediate neighbourhood as well. About burning of villages it may be said that the total number of villages in Nagaland is 860, and even a casual observer can testify that so large a number as 500 villages, as claimed by Mrs. Terhuja could not have been burnt", he said.

Referring to Alemchiba's explanation of the unrest, RAY agreed with him that "the Naga problem is essentially political. Prof. Srinivas and Dr. Roy Burman explained the question of emotional integration and infranationalism. For a political problem we should seek political solution.

"NICHOLS ROY and TERHUJA had earlier alleged that in other parts of India the Hill people have experienced strangeness wherever they visited, for they were taken as Chinese, Indonesian or Burmese, and that this kind of



response had come in the way of their integration with the rest of the Indian population. In this context of confrontation of situation I recall my student days when I had a Professor of Buddhism in Calcutta University who was often taken as a Tibetan, another Professor was taken as Chinese. I had also a Punjabi friend who was taken as Spanish. It is good to be sensitive, but it is not good to be para-sensitive. It does happen in human life".

Referring once again to Nichols Roy's statement on the Khasi situation, RAY remarked, "Khasis have been under the process of integration from an ancient time. The Brahmo Samaj movement in Cherapunji is known to us. Khasis participation in Indian politics is almost total and all the tension that is going on for integration is a natural process as elsewhere. They are all in the mainstream of Indian life. But the Naga and Mizo situation is different. Geopolitically these are very sensitive in the context of we present situation. The terrains at places, geo-politically speaking, are much more difficult and important than even the Vietnamese situation. One cannot ignore the situation. Among the Nasas there are two distinct opinions. One section of them pulls towards China and another section strongly pulls towards India. We are partly responsible for the situation. For instance, we choose Governor who has no idea of the people. When the Nagas want another Governor, why don't we concede to their demand?" Referring to the agitation caused by the encampment of army, he said "we cannot take the army away, but we have to take care of it that army is not doing any harm to the people". At the end of his deliberation, RAY remarked, "Peace mission is good, but there must be other voluntary agencies among them. We must have to make known to them and felt experience to them. If we have done so we shall have done our task".

GULATI read a paper on "Tribes in transition". His main argument was that "the tribal situation in India needs special care and very careful handling by the experts, reformers and designers. The situation is similar in many ways to the 'Sword of Democles' which can become a very real danger to our ambitions of national integration, if not handled very carefully".

BOSE made the following lengthy comments on Gulati's paper :

"Gulati has said that some tribes in India are 'in transition'. If, however, we look at the life of communities in *either the plains or the hills*, we soon discover that all of them are in a state of change, whether rapid or slow.

"When we compare the culture of the inhabitants of different parts of India, we realize that, during the two centuries of British rule, they were very unequally affected or modified as a result of the rule. And even in the same state, different classes of the population did not change to the same extent.

"After Independence, and after the revolutionary measure of adult franchise was introduced in the country, and it was decided that poverty should be eradicated and social equality established, all the components of the nation have been trying to live up to these standards as fast as they possibly can. If we describe the process by the term 'modernization', then it has affected

different parts of India and different classes in an uneven manner.

"It is because of this that there are so many strains and stresses in various parts of our social or political structure.

"Gandhiji tried to inspire us by a secular ideal in which we shall, not only work for economic and social equality and prosperity, but also retain the best elements of Indian civilization. Christianity came into India during the early centuries of the Christian era. The Magis and Zoroastrians successively took refuge in India, and so did the Jews in Cochin. All of them found a home and an honourable place in Indian society. This has indeed been one of the greatest achievements of Indian civilization that every community has been granted the freedom of worship; provided they also assure the same freedom to others to do so. And we have to preserve this respect for cultures other than our own personal ones in the civilization of India of the future.

"The British came into India and consolidated their empire at the expense of the prosperity of the people of this country when taken as a whole. But one of the results of this rule was that the whole of India was brought under a common government. And when India struggled for freedom against British rule, it resulted again in building up a sense of national, political unity which was there never before.

"Once thus achieved through historical accident, we have to maintain and consolidate the unity by every means. The strains of a growing nation are there, while the lofty ideals which we have set before ourselves are also there in order to inspire us into a new adventure.

"In this march towards a better and a richer life, we find that the rural population, which includes both the hillmen as well as peasants of the plains, are lagging behind. All of us are in the same plight; only the condition of some are a little worse than that of others. But the way to progress lies in the same direction".

"If in this great adventure of the eradication of poverty, and the establishment of social and cultural equality, we advance with halting steps, my appeal to my tribal brethren will be that they should also join with us in the same enterprise. For it is only when they share with us the labour of building up a new life that a true and enduring feeling of brotherhood will arise in our midst. We will be true then, not only to the heritage of India derived from the past, but also live up to the highest aspirations of the nation as it looks forward to the future in a modern world"

## Statement issued by the Seminar

1. The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, in collaboration with the Department of Sociology, Delhi University, held a Seminar on "The Tribal Situation in India" at Simla from 6-19 July, 1969. The Seminar was attended by anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, Directors of the Tribal Research Institutes, administrators concerned with tribal welfare, and tribal, political and cultural leaders, to discuss various problems of the tribal people in the context of national unity, territorial integrity and economic and social development.

### *2. Location*

The tribal people, who constitute about 7% of the total population of the country, generally live in hills and forests, some of which are strategically located in the border areas. Despite being a small minority, most of them live in relatively isolated localities where they often constitute a majority. The tribal groups, both within a region and inter-regionally, vary a great deal from each other in physical type, language, economy, culture, styles of living, the nature and intensity of contact with non-tribals, and the extent of political consciousness. The Seminar felt it advisable to assess the situation region by region in order to arrive at a picture of the country as a whole.

### *3. Border Areas*

In the opinion of the Seminar, while tribals all over India need sympathetic consideration, compelling reasons of national security called for more urgent attention to be paid to tribes inhabiting the various border regions particularly in the North-Eastern Hill Areas (NEHA). The introduction of adult franchise in Independent India and the development of communications have resulted in the heightening of political self-consciousness and in demands for regional autonomy in varying degrees.

4. The Seminar was of the view that this kind of problem was not peculiar to India but a common heritage of all new nations which had recently emerged from colonial rule, and indeed not necessarily confined to them. Demands for varying degrees of autonomy are generally a means of ventilating grievances particularly those relating to the fear of loss of cultural identity and exploitation by economically more advanced groups.

If considered with sympathy and understanding such demands facilitate the articulation of interests and lead to more effective integration of the groups concerned, tribal as well as non-tribal, in the nation.

5. While recognising that such demands form part of the normal process of political development, the Seminar was of the view that all problems of group identity and autonomy must be solved within the framework of the Indian Union. Within this boundary varying degrees of autonomy could be given to the constituent units and each demand could be examined on its own merits, taking into account the economic and political viability and the interest of the nation as a whole.

It is against this background that the political aspirations of the people living in the NEHA should be viewed and adequate political solutions must be found urgently within the framework of the Indian Union.

In the NEHA, western Himalaya and in western Rajasthan, national defence requirements and other considerations have led to the opening of roads which are bringing economic opportunities to groups along these roads. In order that the benefits of economic development be more equitably shared, it is necessary to build feeder and link roads to provide communications for those in the interior.

The better economic opportunities created by such public works as road building, and in meeting the needs of the army for food and other local articles are likely to be temporary, and there is therefore an urgent need to provide a more permanent economic base.

In the north-western and central Himalaya, and some portions of the eastern hill regions, there is an urgency for rehabilitating the traders who have lost their traditional trade with Tibet and Pakistan.

#### *6. Land and Economic Problems*

The Constitution provides for the promotion, with special care, of the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and; in particular of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and their protection from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. There should therefore be a clear-cut programme for the tribes with the twin objectives of development and protection, envisaged in the Constitution. The safeguards and freedom from exploitation are in relation to land-alienation and land allotment, usurious money-lending and the practice of forced and bonded labour. It is estimated that approximately 5% of India's tribes depend directly or indirectly on the forests for their livelihood. Any programme of economic development of the tribes must be related to the utilization of the forces for the maximum advantage of the dependent local population. There is need for a review of the current national forest policy



which should take into consideration the interests of the tribals, even if it involves some loss of revenue.

7. Another major economic problem reported to be very acute in the Central belt is that relating to the alienation of land by tribals to non-tribals mainly to discharge debts or to obtain ready cash. From time to time legal measures have been taken by the concerned governments to stop such land transfers, but due to the existence of some legal loopholes and the non-enforcement of existing legislative and executive measures the practice continues. Social workers, anthropologists and the tribals themselves consider land alienation a major source of tribal discontent and a prime factor underlying revivalist, separatist and other movements of social protest.

However, land transfer also goes on from non-tribals to tribals and between tribals themselves, rendering some people landless. The absence of precise figures acts as a spur to preconceived ideas. A major difficulty here as in devising a fool-proof law which protects a simple, illiterate tribal but does not cause hardship to his educated and more sophisticated brother who might like to benefit from the sale of an idle recourse. This particularly applies to land in urban areas.

Economically, tribal people show a considerable diversity ranging from hunters and gatherers to urban workers, white-collar employees and professionals. The problems they face, therefore, also vary a great deal and are often similar to those faced by the poorest sections of our non-tribal peasantry. The long-term answer to these problems would, therefore, lie in the rapid economic development of the country as a whole and the backward regions in particular.

8. Another source of major discontent, again mainly in the central belt, has been the displacement of a large number of tribals due to the establishment of heavy industries, the construction of large dams and the implementation of other projects involving large-scale displacement of people. The Seminar felt that in all such cases the emphasis ought to be on providing, in addition to land and other resettlement facilities (wherever possible), such financial help and training as would enable the displaced persons to adjust themselves to the new conditions and to benefit from the new employment opportunities available. The successful integration of these persons to the new economy will create a climate favourable for taking up other development projects in neighbouring areas.

9. A number of tribals themselves are emerging as entrepreneurs in trade and industry and even in money-lending. Some members of the Seminar voiced complaints against the exploitation of poorer tribals by some of these entrepreneurs. The Seminar, however, felt that the emergence of these entrepreneurs as a bridge between the tribals and the industrial economy should be welcomed, and that they be given all encouragement

while at the same time devising suitable measures for the protection of the mass of the tribals.

#### 10. *Scheduling*

The Constitutional provision regarding political representation of Scheduled Tribes is due for review in 1970. However, there is no time limit in regard to the continuance of special measures for their economic and social development. The Seminar emphasized that the "weakest links" among the Scheduled Tribes have to be identified for purposes of swift and all-round development. The Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has already attempted to identify such communities as have derived comparatively little benefit from the provisions (Report for 1967-68). His classification was on the basis of certain objective criteria in census data such as literacy, percentage of workers engaged in various occupations, remoteness and inaccessibility of habitation, mode of agriculture etc. The Seminar felt that a Commission of Enquiry consisting of social anthropologists, sociologists, agricultural economists, social workers, administrators and leaders of public opinion should be set up for purposes of further identifying such communities. It should also determine the special steps for their protection and intensive economic and social development, and review the effects of a policy of protection and preference on the groups included in the Schedules. It may also examine the existence of anomalies in the Schedules.

#### 11. *Integration and Mass Media*

Nurtured by the vast size of the country—its geographical, linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity—India today has a pluralistic civilization. During its long and chequered history every section of the population has contributed to this truly composite national culture. However, thanks to the rapid development of communications and programmes of planned development since Independence, there is now greater interaction between different sections of the nation. Industrialization and urbanization have led to greater spatial and social mobility resulting in individuals of diverse background coming together as neighbours, colleagues and friends. Unfortunately, such contacts have also given rise to tension and social conflict, particularly in the context of prevailing unemployment and heightened competition for jobs. The real cure for this situation lies in the rapid development of the economy, but in the meanwhile, mass media could be utilized to see that economic rivalry is not translated into inter-group tensions.

12. The press, radio and other mass media have an important role to play in bridging the prevailing gulf of ignorance, misunderstanding and prejudice between tribals and non-tribals. They could explain to the non-tribals the aspirations of the tribals, and publicise the work done by the various

agencies of the Government of India, the state governments, voluntary organisations, political parties and academic institutions on problems of tribal life. Further, they could make clear to the tribals that many of the difficulties faced by them are more or less common to the other underprivileged sections of Indian society with whom they must join hands to find common solutions. Furthermore, if journalists are included in academic seminars—as done here—they could use the press to promote understanding between social scientists and other citizens.

13. Special attention should also be given to the production of popular books, for children and adults, and textbooks, designed to promote knowledge and appreciation of different cultures inhabiting this ancient land. In devising schemes of national service for students care should be taken to ensure that tribal students work in non-tribal areas and non-tribals in tribal areas wherever practicable. There can be no effective emotional integration of the people without developing satisfactory interpersonal relationships between persons of different backgrounds. Voluntary organisations also have a vital role to play in promoting this kind of integration.

In this context the Seminar felt that integration must be sharply differentiated from assimilation which means complete loss of cultural identity for the weaker groups. Each group must be able to uphold its cultural heritage with dignity and a sense of achievement. The development of communications and more satisfactory contacts between people of diverse backgrounds would naturally result in a good deal of give-and-take leading to further enrichment of the content of the national culture. It would perhaps be appropriate here to recall the values enshrined in our Constitution: democracy, secularism, equality of opportunity, and freedom for each group to pursue its own style of life and its own faith. Tolerance is a quality without which we can hardly survive as a nation.

#### 14. *Research*

This brings the Seminar to the question of research into the problems of tribals in the national context. Social scientists, historians and linguists have a special responsibility to identify problems affecting the tribals in different parts of the country and to suggest suitable remedies. Here the universities, the Tribal Research Institute, the Anthropological Survey of India, the Indian Council for Social Science Research, the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, the Commissioner for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, the Department of Social Welfare of the Government of India, the Office of the Registrar General of India, the Education Ministry of the Government of India, and other concerned bodies have an important contribution to make. It is not enough for the problems to be identified and

research to be done: mechanisms have to be established for feeding the results to the Government of India, state governments, the press and the leaders of public opinion. In a democracy like India, the press and the legislatures have to be kept informed about issues affecting the health of the body politic so that correct decisions are made and implemented. In this connection, the Seminar highlighted the responsibility of social scientists to provide the public with objective reports of crisis situations involving conflict between diverse groups.

The Seminar was also of the opinion that Tribal Research Institutes should be more actively associated with evaluation of developmental activity and with the processes of planning and policy-making.

15. To be on guard against static thinking, the Seminar considered it most important to bear in mind that integration is a dynamic and continuing process which necessarily involves mutual give-and-take by the various sections of the national community. As the national economy develops and as individuals from all sections of the population are drawn into it, integration increasingly becomes broader and deeper, giving rise to a new culture which derives its strength and vitality from contributions which every section makes to it. The Seminar stressed that this process could never be complete and that it was for enlightened citizenry and leaders of public opinion to make sure that it never stops.



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## APPENDIX I

# Tribal Situation in Madhya Pradesh

K.C. DUBEY

### I

Madhya Pradesh, the geographic heartland of India, contains the largest population of the scheduled tribes (hereinafter referred to only as 'tribes' or 'tribals' or the tribes of this region, as contained in Shukla's *Tribal Heritage of Madhya Pradesh*), there is no shortage of reference material on the tribes inhabiting the state. It is however, unfortunate that not much effort has either been made by the scholars of this state to properly project themselves or to properly analyse the information or even to present it tribe-wise or subject-wise at one place. Whatever may be the reason but other scholars and experts have made some comments which cannot be said to be quite complimentary.

K.S. Singh in his 'Introduction' in *The Tribal Situation in India*, says, "We skip Madhya Pradesh which has the largest concentration of the tribes because we did not receive any paper on the tribal situation in the state".

Writing in *A Survey of Social Science Research in India*, Professor L.P. Vidyarth says: "The study of tribes has always been neglected in Madhya Pradesh".

In a situation as the one indicated above, it is futile to expect a systematic study of all the tribal movements of the state. An attempt is made here to bring the scattered information at one place.

### II

#### *The Tribal Scenario*

Madhya Pradesh is located in an area of tribal concentration. It and its neighbouring states—Bihar, Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Rajasthan—contain 80 per cent of the country's total tribal population. However, Madhya Pradesh alone contributes 25%. An idea of the massiveness of the tribal population of this state may be had from the fact that it is a little larger than the tribal population of Bihar and Orissa taken together. Again, its tribal population is a little less than the tribal population of Andhra

Pradesh, Gujarat and Rajasthan taken together. The tribal population of Madhya Pradesh (1981) is about 1199 million. It cannot be denied that a portion of these figures is spurious return, some enlightened and benefit-seeking groups and communities returning themselves as tribals. Three illustrative examples are the Murias returned from Narsimhapur district, Majhi being returned from Bhind Morena and other districts of the north-west and returns of Halba tribe from Chhindwara. However, the proportion of such spurious returns in the total tribal population is not significant.

According the Schedules Castes and Schedules Tribes Amendment Act, 1976, there are 47 tribes or groups of tribes in Madhya Pradesh. The grouping of some tribes under one serial is not justified nor is it justifiable to keep the two serials simply because there is difference in the spelling (examples are Aganya and Agaria; Sonr and Sor). The Amendment Act is not within the frame of this paper. Notwithstanding these deficiencies of the Act, the number of tribes is much more than what is indicated by the figure of 47 in the Amendment Act, the actual number being around 80. This fact needs to be kept in mind in appreciating tribal movements.

In the list of tribes as contained in the Act, there are 36 tribes and 9 groups of tribes consisting 45 tribal communities or sub-tribes. There are 15 tribes or sub-tribes which are not found in the state at all.

If 85 tribes and tribal communities or sub-tribes are classified according to their size, the picture is as below :

Below 5,000	37
5,001-10,000	11
10,000-25,000	7
25,001-50,000	7
50,000-1 lakh	10
1 lakh-5 lakh	9
5 lakh-10 lakh	2
10 lakh+	2
	<hr/>
	85

Most of the tribes are numerically small. The tribes whose numerical strength is 1 lakh and more are : Baiga, Barela, Bhattra, Bhil, Bhilala, Halba, Sanwar, Gond, Muria, Dandam Maria, Sahariya and Sonr. It is evident that smaller tribes tend to suffer exploitation and are not able to give vent to their grievances.

The tribal population of the state is spread over all the 45 districts. However, tribal population is more concentrated in some areas as compared to the other. On the basis of concentration, five distinct areas of tribal concentration

can be worked out and these could conveniently be referred to as tribal zones. Such a division is nothing more than purely arbitrary one. Some scholars consider such divisions to be five (*Socio-economic Survey of Primitive Tribes in Madhya Pradesh*) while others make them out as four. Classification of districts under the different zones also differ. Another feature of the tribal zones is that there is no edge-sharp division between one zone and the other and one zone imperceptibly merges into the other. Yet another aspect is that various tribes inhabit more than one zone. Despite arbitrariness, the zones are still useful for a proper appreciation of the tribal situation in the state.

For the purpose of this study, the following five zones could be made out:

### 1. *North-western Tribal Zone*

This zone comprises southern Morena, western and southern Gwalior, western Shivpuri and northern Guna districts. This zone is the most uniform in its composition in that it contains only one tribe—Sahariya—with a little sprinkling of Gond and Bhil tribes.

### 2. *Western Tribal Zone*

This zone comprises southern Ratlam, southern and western Dhar, western Khargone, southern Dewas, Jhabua and some part of Khandwa districts. This zone is also comparatively more uniform and consists of Bhil, Dhilala, Garela, Patelia, Nahal or Nahul and Gonds.

### 3. *Southern Tribal Zone*

This zone spreads over southern parts of Rajnandgaon, southern Durg, southern and eastern Raipur and Bastar districts. This is quite a varied zone in its composition, the tribes being Kamar, Bhunjia, Halba, Muria, Dendami Maria, Hill Maria, Dhurwa and Parja, Donga, Bhattra and Gond. It may however be noted that most of the tribes noted above are considered to be sub-tribes of the Gonds. These tribes are more or less exclusive to this zone. In addition are found Khond, Kavar and Binjhar tribes also.

### 4. *North-Eastern Tribal Zone :*

This zone covers Sidhi, Shahdol, Rewa, northern Bilaspur, Surguja and Raigarh districts. This zone is the exclusive home of the Oraon, Hill and Plain, Panika, Pando, Nagesia, Nagwanshi, Manjhi tribes. Kavar also predominates this area. In addition are found Baiga, Gond, Binjhar, Khairwar and Khond tribes.

### 5. *Central Tribal Zone*

This zone covers almost the entire central part of the state comprising Sagar, Damoh, southern Chhatarpur and Panna, Jabalpur, Mandia, Narsimhapur, Chhindwara, Seoni, Betui, Hoshangabad, Sehore, Raisen and western Bilaspur and northern Rajnandgaon districts. The tribes inhabiting this zone are Saunr,

Gond, Bhumia, Baiga, Bharia, Kol, Korku, Pardhan, Dhoba and Agariya tribes

This variegated complexion of the tribal situation in Madhya Pradesh also needs to be kept in view while viewing the tribal movements. In addition to this, another aspect to be kept in view is the districtwise size of the tribal population and its proportion to the total district population. (Table 1)

This statement is very useful in studying the tribal movements. The discussion given later in this paper would show that tribal movements have occurred in areas where the size of the tribal population and its proportion in the total population of the area are high. This demographic feature is, therefore, an important parameter.

### III

#### *Historical Background*

For quite an appreciable period in its history, the area which now constitutes Madhya Pradesh, was a wild uninhabited area sparsely populated expanse. Who the autochthones of this area were, it is not possible to tell with any degree of certainty. However, it appears that the Kamar tribe of Raipur district and the Hill Korwas were perhaps among the earliest inhabitants. It also appears that the people who are now referred to as 'tribals' in-migrated to this, hilly, wild and forest-clad area earlier than other settlers. What the sequence of this migration was and the various historical periods when it took place are questions that remain shrouded in mystery.

It is known that some tribes like Gonds, Kanwars and Binjhvars had kingdoms, forts and principalities of their own. The three Gond kingdoms—Gerha-Mandia, Khera and Deogarh and the Kanwar fort at Bandhogarh in Shahdol districts are historical facts. We have ourselves seen that as late as 1947, there were many zamindaries of Gond, Binjhvars and Kanwars. Whatever may be the significance of these facts, there is no doubt that the tribes, wherever they lived, were in full command of their resources. This fact of having full command and control of their resources—both land and forest—is relevant to the upsurges that took place later in history.

There is historical evidence that the prosperity of the tribes, in whatever condition they were, was disrupted by later immigrants who possessed more advanced technology. Earlier tribals like the Kamars and Bhunjias were dispossessed of their resources by the Gonds. Oraons displaced the Korwas and so on. In turn, the Gond kingdoms were shattered by Moghuls. Absolute ownership over land and forest resources of the tribes were disrupted by later immigrants possessing more advanced technology. This process is in operation even today—the Dandami Marias of Bastar are dispossessing the Hill Marias and the Dandami Marias are in turn being dispossessed by other people—both tribals and non-tribals.



The first resource over which the tribals lost their hold was land. Land belonging to the tribals was legally or fraudulently usurped by more influential tribals and non-tribals. This process has not ceased and is in operation even today. With the loss of land resource, the tribals had to increasingly depend on forests. It were the forests where the deities were enshrined. The forests provided sites for primitive slash-and-burn cultivation. The forests provided roots and tubers for sustenance. With the land gone, the forests were everything to them.

Whereas this is one side of the picture, the other and more pathetic side was the government itself coming on the scene and dispossessing the tribals from their land by way of acquiring it for mining, industrial and other projects. This latter aspect was going at a slow pace in the pre-independence period but it has acquired alarming proportion in the period following 1947. It appeared that the prosperity of the nation depended only on dispossessing the tribal from his and with no thought given to his rehabilitation. This process is, unfortunately, at work even today and thousands of tribals are being driven out of their land resource in the name of development.

In the post-independence period, the land belonging to the tribals began to be compulsorily acquired for mining, industrial and irrigation projects and for wild life sanctuaries. No definite policy has been adopted for their rehabilitation except paying them the cash compensation. Even if there is a policy, it remains confined to the air-conditioned chambers of the central and state secretariats. The unfortunate experience, whether Bargi Dam Project, Malanjhand Copper Project, Bailadilla Iron Ore Project, D.B.K. Railway or the Narmada Sagar, have been the same sad story of snatching away their land and leaving them on their own with just some cash.

The fate of tribal dwellers of the so-called 'forest-villages' has been more poignant. When wild life sanctuaries are demarcated or expanded, as has been the case of Kanha-Nishi in Mandla district, the tribals are just evicted. No care is taken for their rehabilitation. Though in theory, it is said that bamboo and timber would be given to them, nothing happens in practice.

The unfortunate result in this case and the case mentioned in the preceding paragraph, leads to deprivation of the tribals of their economic mainstay and tends to degenerate them into slaves. This unfortunate situation could not escape the eyes of such a keen observer as Nirad C. Chaudhary. In his *Continent of Circe*, Chaudhary says:

In an industrialized India the destruction of the aboriginal's life is as inevitable as the submergence of the Egyptian temples caused by the dams of the Nile.... As things are going there can be no grandeur in the primitive's end. It will not be simple extinction, which is not the wont of human destinies. It is to be feared that the aboriginal's last act will be squalid, instead of being tragic. What will be seen with most regret will be, not his disappearance, but his enslavement and degradation.<sup>5</sup>

The other resource on which the tribals subsisted and are still subsisting to a great extent, is forest. Here also, the tribals' command and control over this resource has increasingly weakened as time has passed by. No evidence is available pertaining to the period prior to the advent of British rule. Maybe the historical times were days of plenty and Moghul and Maratha administration and their preceding rulers did not interfere in the command of the tribals over forests. The picture changed after the advent of the British on the Indian historical scene.

There can be no doubt that the British came into contact with the various tribal communities at a much later stage when they contacted the non-tribal plain areas. But when they came into contact with the tribals, their attempt to enter their areas or to bring the tribals under control, was resisted. However, this aspect could be discussed at a later stage in this paper.

May be that the tribals of the distant past did not do much on the forests because they had ample land resource. However, ever since definite evidence is available, forest occupy the central position in tribal life and economy. "Even in areas where forests do not exist, the tribals still visit distant forests to get their traditional requirements from there." (Tiwari, 1986)

Soon after the British settled here after 1857, they put certain restrictions on the tribals' freedom of the forests. This led to resistance from the tribals. Revolts took place in other parts of India and August Cleveland laid the foundation of policy embodied in the Regulation of 1876. This was followed by the Government of India Act of 1919. Many parts of the state like the feudatory states and smaller zamindaries were, however, outside the direct control of the British and the tribals living therein continued to enjoy greater freedom of the forests as compared to the people in British India. In these areas the tribals continued to practice their primitive system of slash-and-burn cultivation. Even in the British administered areas as in Mandia district, the tribals were permitted to continue their shifting cultivation in certain areas. In other parts as in Chhindwara, the shifting cultivation continued stealthily.

After Independence and particularly after 1951, more and more restrictions were imposed on the tribals' command over forest resources. By itself the policy may not have been bad but the execution of it at the micro-level was certainly bad. The right to their traditional cultivation was snatched but no alternative was given to them nor was any assistance and training made available to them. The lower hierarchy of forest officials harassed and persecuted the tribals and became a source of terror. This led to discontent and hostility and in some cases open resistance.<sup>6</sup>

### *Administrative Backdrop*

When the British gained control over areas which now constitute Madhya

Pradesh, there were many feudatory states and princely states like Gwalior, Holkar, Dhar, Sailana, Jhabua, Barwani, Bastar, Sarangarh, Raigarh, Jashpur, Surguja, Korea, Rajnandgaon, Kawardha and so on. In addition, there were many smaller principalities in the form of zamindaries like Saraipali, Bindranawagarh, Fingeshwar, Harrai, Dondi Lohara, Sonakhan, Komakhan and so on. The British Administration did not concern itself with the routine administration of these areas except by way of appointing Court of Wards or by way of appointing Diwans and making time to time inspections by the Political Agent.

As it was, most of the tribal areas of what is now Madhya Pradesh, was situated in these princely zamindari states. These tribals on the one hand did not get the benefits of a settled administration of the then British Government. But on the other hand, they enjoyed more freedom of the forests. They were not conversant with the forest and excise rules prevalent in the British administered areas. They were comparatively more secluded also.

#### IV

##### *Inventory of Tribal Movements in Madhya Pradesh*

The literature available on the subject shows that there have been three broad types of movements in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh :

In between the first and the second category, that is between uprisings on the one side and reformist movement on the other falls another category or movements which were not reformatory or socio-religious or socio-cultural movements nor were these uprisings or rebellions. They were rallying together of thousands of tribals under one banner and one leadership. They gave sufficient concern to the law and order administration but did not result into violence on either side. Four such movements are under this category:

1. Mama Baleshwar Dayal's Movement of possessing forest land: Jhabua and Ratlam Districts, 1951
2. 'Possess Forest Land' Movement among the Bhils of Khargone District, 1965-75
3. Gond Sarkar March in Durg, Rajnandgaon Balaghat, Chhindwara, 1955-65.
4. Lal Shyam Shan movement, Durg, Rajnandgaon and Baster

The situation of tribal uprisings and movements may be seen from two angles: one, the geographical or area-wise location of the movements and uprisings with reference to the proportion of tribal population in the different regions of the state. The other angle could be to locate the movements with reference to the tribe or tribes that participated in them.

The size of the tribal population of the districts and the proportion of the

movement. Thus, on both these considerations only about one-fourth of the total tribal communities have taken part in uprisings or movements.

The concerned tribal communities may be listed below for clarity and ready reference. In the following those tribes who have taken part in some uprising or movement are shown in both ways, that is, according to how they occur in the list given in the Act (*de jure*) and as independent entities (*de facto*).

It will be relevant at this stage to see the population size of the different tribes (as they are listed in the Act because population of tribal groups clubbed under some tribe is not known separately). The tribes are listed below in descending order on the basis of their numerical strength.

There have been no uprisings and movements in relatively small tribes. If the population figures of 1981 are any indication of the numerical strength of the tribes, relatively speaking, it may be noted that more uprisings and movements have taken place in numerically bigger tribes. Of the 12 tribes and tribal groups that have been involved in any uprising or movement 8 (Gond, Bhil, Kavar, Halba, Bhattra, Binjhar, Oraon and Korku) are numerically large tribes as against 4 (Hill Korwa, Nagesia, Khairwar and Majhi) which could be said to be numerically small tribes.

However, it will not be quite correct to refer to Khairwars and Majhi as small tribes, because though their number in Madhya Pradesh may be small. The ethnic region extends in contiguous Bihar and in this ethnic region, their number is substantial.

As far as the various tribes of Bastar, which are included under the omni-bus term Gond are concerned, the separate population figures of these are not available. However, some estimate of their respective numerical strength may be had from the estimates given by Grigson who was Administrator of Bastar State. His estimates refer to 1931.

Bison-horn Maria	146,070
Hill Maria	11,500
Muria	110,000
Koya	8,000
Marja	17,568

Grigson's estimate about the Koya appear to be on the low side. However, it is not possible to go for more groping about that aspect in the present paper. These estimates show that these tribal groups of Bastar cannot be said to be small.

Whereas this is one aspect of the picture, the other is that no movements or uprisings are known to have taken place in many numerically big tribes like Saharia, Baiga, Kol, Saunr, Agaria and so on. It is not that they were not affected by various restrictions on the freedom of the forests or indiscriminate use of land resource. It is also not that they were completely unaffected by the various movements that their dominant neighbours underwent. The situation



is not an easy one to explain. Unless more research information is available, any explanation in our present stage of scanty knowledge can at best be only a surmise.

Very broadly seen, it appears that those tribes whose economic condition has always been precarious and mainly on-agricultural one, and who, in consequence, have to toil all the time in quest of food, never had any time and inclinations for such phenomena as uprisings and movements. Kol, Saunr, Saharia and Kamar, etc. are the tribes that belong to this class. While this statement is being made, it is fully realized that this feature appears as a paradox because these are the tribes who were more affected by restrictions in the freedom of the forcit. This paradox will have to be cleared by future researchers.

It may also be noted that these—Kol, Saharia, Saunr—are the tribes that have long been under the process of detribalization with consequent decay of the social organisation and the religious and secular leadership. Getting a little deeper, it may also be noted that as far as Madhya Pradesh is concerned, the history of the tribes is also an important factor in this connection. In the tribal complex of Madhya Pradesh, one can easily make out two classes. Tribes like Gonds, Kanwars, Binjhwar, Halba, Bhattra and Korku, etc. belong to one class and tribes like Agana, Baiga, Kamar, Saharia, Saunr, etc. fall in the other class. The former class is that of the elite tribes who in some cases were rulers of the area till at least up to 17th century or so.

In our present stage of knowledge it appears that it is the 'elite' tribes who are more prone to uprisings and movements. While making this tentative suggestion, full note is taken of the fact that Dalton mentions of a Kol empire in Chhota Nagpur and the Kols also belonging to 'elite' class in the sense that term is used here. However, it is clear that even if this were the case, the Kols have ceased to be elite after having superceded by the powerful Gonds and since at least 500 years they are continuously on the downward path of getting detribalized and stagnated. This has gone to such an extent that in Uttar Pradesh, the Kols are not treated as a scheduled tribe but as a scheduled caste. Whether eliticism has anything to do with uprisings and movements is a matter for future research.

All the uprisings and insurgencies in the tribal world of Madhya Pradesh have occurred when the concerned tribal community or communities are under some stress due to real or supposed interference in their freedom of the forests and land and when there was a real or supposed infringement of their traditional customary rights, rites, rituals, ceremonies and beliefs. When such an interference crossed the toleration limits, the tribal community or communities took to arms to counteract it.

Another common feature of the tribal uprisings and rebellions is that such phenomena were preceded by some natural or other crisis. Whereas this is the case with almost all events of uprisings and rebellions, it is not always

true in case of the movements.

Another feature noticeable from the available accounts is that the tribal uprisings, insurgencies and rebellions are usually preceded by a long period of suffering, oppression, exploitation and non-redressal of grievances. This is not the case with movements. During the period of sufferings and anxiety, some crisis appears and this sparks the fire of uprising or revolt. In cases of movements, the phenomenon of crisis is generally not present, but, when it is there, it results into the emergence of some charismatic leader who gives birth to the movement. The movements of Rajmohini Devi and Bihari Das are examples of this.

It is also important to note that practically all the uprisings and rebellions in the tribal world of Madhya Pradesh had their genesis in the inspiration or machinations of either some elite member of the tribe or mostly some outsider. This is not usually the case with the social movements which are generally inspired by some or many insiders. The only exception to this is the movement of Bihari Das in Bastar who, though not a tribal himself, has been able to get a large following of tribals.

We may now briefly discuss the Christianization movement among the tribals. Various Christian missions are working in the tribal areas of Madhya Pradesh for a long time. In some cases, as in Jashpur, their history is now more than a century old. However, there are two tribal areas where spread of Christianity has assumed the shape of well-organized and well-executed socio-economic acculturation movement in which the tribals themselves are working as motivators. These, two areas could be said to be, one, Jashpur, Dharam-jaigarh, Surguja area and two, Jhabua. In the former area and particularly in the Jashpur area, the impact of Christianity is being felt for a long time and its history can be traced to nearly a century from now. In the latter area, the movement is still in its formative stage.

The phenomenal spread of Christianity among the Oraon tribe inhabiting Raigarh and Surguja districts is certainly going on as an acculturation movement. The missionaries have not materially interfered with the tribal life and culture. The constructive work that they are doing is in the field of education, public health and hygiene and building up various facets of character. Initially they took up only education and health but later economic ingredients have also been incorporated.

The steps for economic development among the tribals were taken by the missionaries in a big way particularly after the government launched the Community Development Programme. The missions adopted many of the schemes of the community development. To cite only one example, they adopted the seed centre or the Grain Gola scheme of Community Development programme and named it Mission Cola. Needless to say that the Mission Golas became more popular than those started by the government.

As far as Jhabua is concerned, the Christianization movement is still in

the formative stage but it is already making its presence felt. As far as its past is concerned, it may be sufficient to quote from the *Report of 1931 Census* (Vol. XX, *Central Indian States*). C.S. Venkatachar, the author of that Report states:

The Roman Catholic Mission works mostly amongst the Bhils. In Jhabua the mission runs a number of schools principally for the Christian Bhils where boarding is also provided for boys and girls. The priest in-charge of the mission at Jhabua remarks that 'as for schools, the Bhils still hate schools'. The mission also does a good deal of work in providing medical aid in the villages.

In other areas of the state, the conversion of people of other tenets to Christianity is taking place as a normal phenomenon and not as a well-conceived movement amongst the Oraons and the Bhils. The results of the movement are too many to be counted and too well-known to be mentioned. However, mention may be made of just two very manifest results: one, literacy has improved. The other very obvious result is to develop in the Oraon Christians a sense of pride in their tribe and creating in them a sense of identity with other tribal Christians in the area and across the border in Bihar.

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TABLE 1. Districts of Madhya Pradesh arranged in descending order according to the size of the tribal population and the proportion of tribal to total district population.

No.	District	Tribal population (in lakhs)	% of tribal to total population
1	2	3	4
1.	Bastar	12.89	67.78
2.	Sarguja	8.95	54.81
3.	Khargone	7.05	43.25
4.	Raigarh	7.00	48.51
5.	Bilaspur	6.90	23.39
6.	Jhabua	6.63	83.47
7.	Shahdol	6.38	47.44
8.	Mandla	6.26	60.35
9.	Raipur	5.70	18.65
10.	Dhar	5.70	18.65
11.	Chhindwara	4.11	33.36
12.	Jabalpur	3.83	17.43
13.	Betul	3.24	36.13
14.	Sidhi	3.09	31.26
15.	Khandwa	2.95	25.64
16.	Rajnandgaon	2.95	25.28
17.	Seoni	2.94	36.35
18.	Balaghat	2.50	31.82
19.	Durg	2.38	12.63
20.	Ratlam	1.68	21.48
21.	Hoshangabad	1.60	15.38
22.	Satna	1.57	18.36
23.	Rewa	1.45	12.04
24.	Sagar	1.14	8.68
25.	Guna	1.09	10.96
26.	Dewas	1.09	13.83
27.	Raisen	1.09	15.43
28.	Damoh	0.86	11.96
29.	Shivpuri	0.86	8.98
30.	Narsimhapur	0.83	12.87
31.	Tikamgarh	0.76	4.15
32.	Morena	0.68	5.26
33.	Indore	0.66	4.74
34.	Mandsaur	0.65	5.19



1	2	3	4
35.	Sehore	0.59	9.11
36.	Vidisha	0.33	4.30
37.	Gwalior	0.30	2.77
38.	Tikamgarh	0.30	4.15
39.	Chhatarpur	0.26	2.98
40.	Rajgarh	0.23	2.96
41.	Ujjain	0.21	1.93
42.	Bhopal	0.20	2.30
43.	Shajpur	0.18	2.19
44.	Datia	0.04	1.37
45.	Bhind	0.01	0.13
Madhya Pradesh		119.87	22.97

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## Book Reviews

When in 1972 I called at the office of the Harijan Welfare Department in Kerala and met the Director, and intimated that I wanted to undertake some research among the tribal Malapantaram, my suggestion was greeted in the office with hoots of laughter. That anyone should want to undertake research among a group of nomadic foragers seemed to those present to be highly amusing, even incredible. I was struck also at the time by the dearth of material on the socio-economic context and on the wider problems of tribal communities in India although there were of course the classical studies of Elwin, Roy, Aiyappan, Vidyarthi and Haimendorf, as well as some publications by the Anthropological Survey of India. All this changed in that same year – 1972 with the publication of *Tribal Situation in India*, edited and inspired by the historian K. Suresh Singh. The book was based on a seminar organized by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study and offered a wealth of data and reflections on the tribal situation in India by some forty scholars. The book was seminal and path-breaking and it is still in print.

Brian Morris, [Review of] *Continuity and Change in Tribal Society*,  
by Mrinal Miri (ed.) *Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute*  
(1965), 1/1, p. 197

The Institute brought together cross-section of people connected with the subject with a view to make possible a comprehensive and integral view and a multi-disciplinary approach to the investigation of this very vital social and national problem. Despite all this, the book is a valuable contribution to the understanding, appreciation and study of the tribal problems in India. For the first time, a multi-disciplinary approach has been evolved and a stock-taking of the situation in different areas of the country has been attempted. As the editor points out the study of tribal movements with regard to their locus and leadership based on primary sources is also a relatively uncharted area.... Intensive research is needed at micro-level to bring out the complexity of the tribal situation in its agrarian, political, acculturation and economic dimensions. More information is needed to appreciate the tribal situation and framing issues for social action and adaptive research in future.

Sitakanta Mahapatra  
In Quest No. 56, Jan/Feb. 1979.



Perhaps the most valuable contribution of the book is that it lays bare the processes that govern the growth and development of the 'official' science. From this perspective, the tribal problem is similar to that of the Indian masses as a whole, and those who would try to present it as something exotic and unusual only serve to sow division among the people on the one hand, and to create an ideology which supports arguments which favour repression on the other. In this respect, anyone seriously interested in the tribals' problems and how they are related to the problems of the Indian people as a whole would be well advised to read Dr. K.S. Singh's two articles, "Agrarian Issues in Chotanagpur" and "Famine, Scarcity and Economic Development", in the second section of the volume. In the latter, in fact, there is a particularly apt refutation of the irresponsible view that it is 'personal' or 'party' interests that trigger off tribal unrest and not deeper economic ills.

Suneet Chopra

"Tribals: Does Anybody Care?",  
*The Times of India*, April, 15, 1973

In total the book under review is a welcome addition as it reflects the contemporary situation of the tribes specially in the light of a relatively long pause from the Indian anthropologists since they turned their attention to the village study in the mid 50s. This book will be extremely useful as source material for scholars and administrators. The editor and the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Simla, must be congratulated for bringing about this volume. In spite of great research utility of the volume, I am afraid many of us will not be able to keep a copy of the book due to very high price.

Binod C. Agrawal

*Indian Anthropologist*,  
*Journal of the Indian Anthropological Association*,  
Vol. II, No. 1, June 1972, pp. 64-7.



The Indian Institute of Advanced Study, in collaboration with the Centre for Advanced Study in Sociology of the Delhi University, convened a Seminar on the Tribal Situation in India (1969). The objectives of the Seminar were: (i) stocking of the available information on the basis of the first-hand studies on the problems of tribes, region by region, (ii) framing detailed suggestions regarding the problems which need immediate attention, and (iii) evolving policy guidelines on national unity and integration of tribes. In keeping with its tradition of building up multidisciplinary approaches to the investigation of social/national problems, the Institute brought together a cross-section of the people connected with tribal situation: there were anthropologists, sociologists, social workers, journalists, political leaders, representatives of tribal research institutes and other institutes involved in tribal studies. The book contains the proceedings of the seminar and the papers presented. This work became very popular at the policy, teaching and research levels and went into many reprints. The first work of its kind with its comprehensive survey and policy suggestions, it was described as "seminal and path-breaking". The present edition contains some fresh material.

K.S. SINGH, formerly of the Indian Administrative Service, spent many years in Jharkhand serving and studying tribal people. Among his well known works are: *Birsa Munda and his movement* (1983), *The Indian Famine 1967; a study in crisis and change* (1974) and *Tribal Society of India: an anthropo-historical perspective* (1985). His *magnum opus* has been the 43 volume People of India Project based on the first pan-Indian survey of all communities of India, conceptualised and executed by him when he was Director General of Anthropological Survey of India (1984-93) which has been acclaimed for its enduring contribution to anthropological and sociological research in India.